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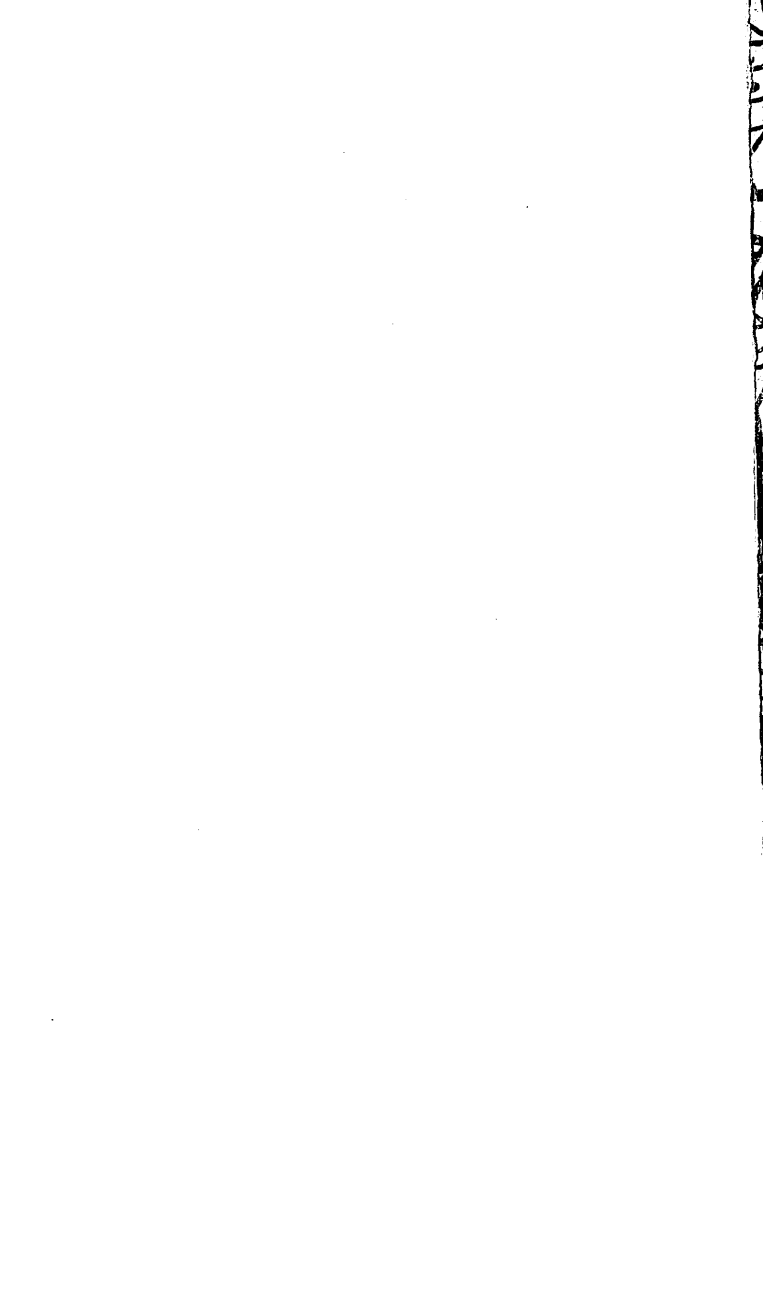
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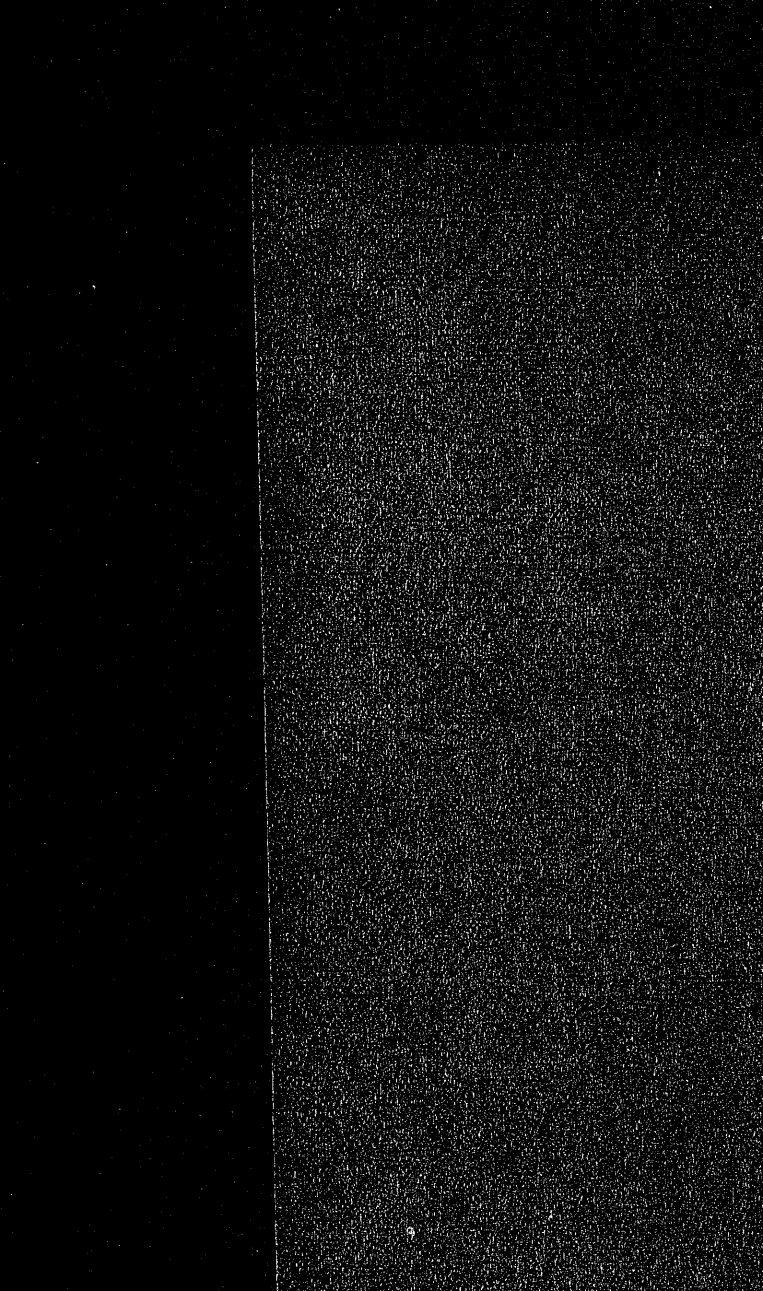


**THE
CHURCH'S MESSAGE
FOR THE
COMING TIME**



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**THE FAITH
OF THE
CATHOLIC
CHURCH
BY THE REV.
A.W.F. BLUNT**



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The Church's Message for the Coming Time

(A series of hand-books for the people)

EDITOR : THE REV. H. T. KNIGHT, M.A.

Each writer is responsible only for his own book, but the series is undertaken in the joint conviction—

- (1.) That Christianity holds the key of the coming time ;
- (2.) That Christianity means Churchmanship, viz., membership in a Divine Society, which reveals the spiritual basis alike of the family, the nation, and the race ;
- (3.) That the Catholic Church, the fellowship of the baptised, is really the organ of the world's redemption, since the living God, Who spake by the Hebrew Prophets, has given in Christ Jesus His final message to humanity, and has assigned to His Church the task of its progressive interpretation ;
- (4.) That the moral and intellectual bewilderment of our generation, resulting from the influx of new knowledge and the uprising of new enthusiasms during the last half-century, has now been brought to a climax, which provides the Church with a unique opportunity for explaining her mission to the world ;
- (5.) That, while the call of the Church must always be to repentance, the primary summons of to-day is rather to frank and careful re-statement, since Christian people cannot realize the extent of their failure, unless they have an adequate vision of what the Church is intended to be ;
- (6.) That the Church's message cannot satisfy the spiritual requirements of to-day unless it is presented in terms which are consistent with modern Biblical investigation, and in a manner sympathetic alike to modern scientific discoveries and to modern social aspirations ;
- (7.) That faith in the living Christ constitutes the true centre of human knowledge, and the true ground of confidence for the future.

THE
THE FAITH OF
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CATHOLIC CHURCH

By the

Rev. A. W. F. BLUNT, M.A.

Vicar of Carrington ; Examining Chaplain to the Bishop of Southwell ;
sometime Fellow and Classical Lecturer of
Exeter College, Oxford

Blunt

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OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
LONDON EDINBURGH GLASGOW
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PREFACE

THE subject may be further studied, (1) as regards its doctrinal aspect, in such books as the Bampton Lectures of Liddon, Gore, and Ottley; Inge, "Faith and its Psychology"; Westcott, "The Historic Faith"; Moberly, "Atonement and Personality"; W. Temple, "The Faith and Modern Thought"; Glover, "The Christian Tradition and its Verification"; Dearmer, "False Gods"; G. K. Chesterton, "Heretics," and "Orthodoxy"; and in various of Illingworth's works, especially "Personality Human and Divine," "Divine Immanence," "The Doctrine of the Trinity." (2) The critical questions involved are dealt with in such books as Headlam's "The Miracles of the New Testament"; Illingworth's "The Gospel Miracles," and many others. (3) The history of the Creeds is given in Swete, "The Apostles' Creed"; Gibson, "The Three Creeds"; Burn, "The Athanasian Creed."

To these and numerous other books my indebtedness is great. I have also to express my cordial thanks to Dr. Field, Vicar of St. Mary's, Nottingham, and to the General Editor of this series, for reading through this book in MS. and for much help.

A. W. F. B.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFACE	v
I.—THE FAITH ONCE DELIVERED TO THE SAINTS	i
II.—THE FORMULÆ OF THE FAITH ..	17
III.—THE APOSTLES' CREED—	
PART I	28
2	36
3	54
IV.—THE FAITH WITHIN THE CREED ..	75

THE FAITH OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH



I.

THE FAITH ONCE DELIVERED TO THE SAINTS

ALL forms of human association are alike in two outstanding points;—(1) They all have a condition of membership. In societies like the family or the nation the condition is a fact of nature; in others it is some form of admission, ranging in character from a ceremony of initiation to the payment of an entrance-fee, which constitutes a man a member of the society. (2) They all have a basis of fellowship, consisting in a common spirit or tone or purpose, which binds the body together, and which the individual finds already existing in it, on his entrance into its circle. All members do not personally assimilate this spirit in equal degree. There are good and bad Freemasons, loyal and disloyal, zealous and indifferent, members of a Friendly Society or a Trades Union or a Religious Order, congenial and uncongenial members of a Club. But the wish of the Society in each case is that all its members should heartily enter into the common spirit and make it their own, and its effort, whether directly or indirectly made, is so to indoctrinate them that their membership shall be cordial.

Christianity has been from the outset a corporate and social religion, the religion of men enrolled in a particular kind of fellowship, not of men in isolation from their fellows. And the Christian brotherhood has the same general characteristics as we have just seen to prevail in other societies. It has its condition of membership. It is the society of the baptized. Baptism is the rite by which an individual is admitted to member-

ship in the Catholic Church. The basis of its fellowship is the Christian Faith ; it is this which gives the distinctive tone and spirit and purpose of the Church. All its members are not equally "faithful." Some accept the Faith heartily, others conventionally ; others dissent from it in minor or major points. Whatever may be their personal views, there remains unaltered for all the status of membership in the Catholic Church, which was conferred on them in Baptism. But the Church's wish, as a matter of course, is that all its members should be wholehearted in acceptance of its common Faith ; it seeks so to teach and instil it into them that all shall receive it from the heart. And the Creed is the formula in which the fundamentals of that Faith are summarized, for the instruction of all who wish to learn what are the common truths on which the Christian Society is based.

This Creed is a document with a history. It did not spring full-grown into existence. The Church began, not with a clear-cut formula, but with an intense experience, the experience of God revealed in Jesus Christ, and with an overmastering impulse to tell it forth, that others might wish to share it. "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you also, that ye also may have fellowship with us ; yea, and our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John i. 3). But the very desire to tell this experience involved the necessity of finding words that would do it justice ; and this was not easy. All of us know in some measure how hard it is to discover language that gives a full account of even simple experiences. Speech defines ideas, and so necessarily limits them ; and two men can seldom be found to give quite the same account of the same experience. We remember Tennyson's complaint of the inadequacy of language to express that which he had been through :

Vague words ! but, ah, how hard to frame
 In matter-moulded forms of speech,
 Or ev'n for intellect to reach
 Thro' memory that which I became."

—(In Memoriam, XCV. xii.)

And so it is not surprising, that many years passed,

before the Church was satisfied with its own formularies. The experience was there from the beginning ; the belief which it inspired was held from the beginning ; and the Church neither made nor desired to make any additions to this primary belief. From the beginning it strove to "continue stedfastly in the Apostles' teaching" (Acts ii. 42). But time and experiment and discussion were needed, before a form of words was reached, which seemed to the Church adequate to safeguard in language the truths which it had always held in conviction. The effort had to be made. The Christian Society, like any other society, had to attempt to state definitely the truths for which it stood, to formulate the meaning of that which it had "seen and heard," in order that on the basis of this formula others might be enabled to see and hear the same. The Creed was the formula, in which at last the Church was content to find a satisfactory expression of its Faith. But the experience which produced that Faith was prior to any accepted formulation of it. The Apostolic teaching was the first effort to define this experience ; and the process by which the Creed developed was simply the process by which the Church grew in understanding of that teaching and in power to express its significance. Thus, if we wish to understand the Creed, we must go back and try to discover what were the particular convictions which it was intended to state, the truths which the earliest Christian preachers taught and the earliest Christian believers received.

To find this, we must turn to the early chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, and to the record which they contain of the first Christian preaching. Of course this book was not written before many, probably not before any, of St. Paul's Epistles. And its reports of the Apostles' earliest sermons can hardly be taken as *verbatim* reproductions. They are evidently much condensed ; and it is very likely that the author of the book had nothing more than summaries of the speeches to work upon, and that he wove, out of these, consecutive discourses, according to his own conception or remembrance of what such a discourse at such a time had been

like. But it is certain that he has done his work with extraordinary fidelity to the historical situation. The speeches, as we read them, breathe the atmosphere of primitive Christianity, and not of a later period of thought. Their flavour is archaic; there is no tinge of the more developed language even of St. Paul's writings. And if, as is on every ground probable to the point of certainty, the author of the Acts is St. Luke, one of St. Paul's favourite companions in travel, he must have had unique opportunities of hearing from many quarters the gist of this early preaching. The nature of these discourses, and the circumstances under which they were delivered, would imprint them deeply on the minds of their hearers. Even in these days of homiletic surfeit we occasionally hear a sermon which we never forget. There were men living, whom St. Luke might have known and probably did know, for whom these early sermons had proved the turning-point of their lives. At any rate we have every reason for feeling confident that the speeches in the Acts fairly represent the line taken by the earliest Christian teachers; and in that confidence we can proceed to examine them.

Let us remember, however, that these speeches do not represent any teaching given to those who were already Christians. Of such teaching we have no examples from this early time. The speeches in the Acts arise, each out of a special set of circumstances; and each is delivered to an audience not yet Christian. But for our purpose this is a real advantage. For it is when speaking under such conditions, that a man is most likely to show the bed-rock of his meaning, to state his main truths in the most simple language at his command, the language in which his real convictions are made clear to others and clearer to himself. Perhaps nobody has faced the question of what he really believes, until he has made a serious attempt to explain it to a small child. And the speeches in the Acts are in effect such attempts; they are bed-rock Christianity; they were intended to make converts, and therefore contain precisely what we are seeking, *viz.* the simplest statements of what the new Society meant.

The speech of St. Peter on the day of Pentecost sets the type. It is delivered to Jews, who, it is assumed, had known, or known about, Jesus; and the gist of it is simply this: "the Jesus, Who was such as you knew Him, Whom you killed, has been raised from the dead by God and exalted at His right hand, has been thus declared to be Lord and Christ, and is now the source of inspiration to those who believe in Him." Every element of the Christian preaching of all ages is contained in this outline. There is (1) the reference to the historical life; "Jesus, as you know, was a man approved of God by mighty works and wonders and signs, which God did by Him": (2) the appeal to personal testimony; "we are witnesses that God raised Him from the dead; and you can see and hear for yourselves the signs of the Divine inspiration which He has poured forth": (3) the suggested interpretation; "God has made this Jesus both Lord and Christ": (4) the challenge to verify for themselves the interpretation; "repent and be baptized into His name, and you will be saved from your sins; for you too will share in this inspiration, and escape out of the crooked generation which does not share in it." The same thoughts recur in the speech of Chapter III. The evidence of Jesus' present power is on this occasion the cure of the lame man, and not the speaking with tongues. But the interpretation is the same; "Jesus is the appointed Christ"; and there is added a definite forecast of His Return in the "times of the restoration of all things, whereof God spake by the mouth of His holy prophets." The call to Repentance is given, but the speech is interrupted before the invitation to Baptism could be delivered; in the sequel of Chapter IV, Salvation in the Name of Christ is asserted. So again, in Chapter V, it is declared that God has exalted Jesus to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins.

All these utterances were made to Jews. In Chapter X, we have the report of a sermon to Gentiles, though to Gentiles living in Palestine, who therefore were not unacquainted with the life and work of Jesus of Nazareth. The argument is still the same, but the picture is pre-

sented in somewhat more detail. "Jesus was anointed by God with the Holy Ghost"; this is a paraphrase of the title "the Christ, the anointed One," in order to make it intelligible to Gentile minds. Of this anointing His life was the evidence; "He went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil." His Resurrection is attested by the Apostles themselves. And the interpretation is that He is "Lord of all," "ordained to judge quick and dead." The challenge is given to believe on Him and receive remission of sins. The Holy Ghost, falling on the hearers, then gives His own attestation; and their baptism follows.

These sermons must be taken as representative specimens of the mission preaching of the earliest Christian days; but it is plain that they can only be typical outlines. Some points must have required explanation and amplification; in particular, very much more detail of the life and teaching and personality of Jesus must have been given, where necessary. It is true that St. Paul's Epistles say very little about the three years' Ministry of his Master; but it must be observed that those Epistles do not represent the first, but a later, stage in the teaching of the Apostles. In his sermons St. Paul, as he himself reminds the Corinthians, delivered first of all the historical record which he had received (1 Corinthians xv. 1, 3). His Epistles are designed not to restate this basis, but to teach the inferences of the Christian Faith. It is frankly incredible that the Apostolic preachers said little or nothing to reproduce to others the personal impression which Jesus had made on themselves. If, when speaking to those who had known, or known about, Him, they referred to His historical life, as the records of the Acts show that they did, they must have entered into much fuller detail, when speaking to those who had no such acquaintance with the facts of His Ministry. This supposition is not pure guesswork. Gospels would never have been written, if the earthly life of Jesus had not been a subject of supreme interest to the Christian Church. What was the reason for the special value attached to the evidence of eye-witnesses, e.g. in the opening words of St. Luke's Gospel,

if it was not that they could give authentic details of Jesus' life on earth? The story of His sayings and doings and appearance and personality must have been familiar to the first Christian converts. It may perhaps be fanciful to see, in the Figure of the first chapter of Revelation, a kind of glorified reminiscence of Jesus' personal appearance. But it is difficult not to feel that the characteristics of Love in 1 Corinthians xiii. are borrowed from the remembered qualities of His character. We need, however, appeal to nothing but human nature to support the supposition, that the Apostles must have filled up and coloured for their hearers the outline of their portrait of Jesus Christ. If this Jesus was Lord and Christ, the question "what had He been like?" was inevitable, and an answer would be imperatively required. The example of His known character was needed to give definition and precision to the inspiration from Him, of which they were conscious. A picture of the historical Jesus of Nazareth must have formed an indispensable element in the earliest preaching of Him as the Christ.

To this picture the Apostles attached an interpretation. Jesus is "Lord and Christ," God's "Holy Servant," "His Son," "the Prince of life," "Lord of all," "Saviour." The exact bearing of these titles is not easy to appraise. We may say with certainty that they represent Jesus as fulfilling the traditional Jewish hopes of the Messiah; and by the time of Christ the Jewish hope had come to be fixed on a Being of supernatural origin. But it is not certain that this Being was conceived of as definitely Divine. We reach surer ground when we leave the consideration of mere titles, to note certain prerogatives which the first Christian preachers ascribed to Jesus. (1) The claim that He would judge the world was the definite attribution to Him of a distinctively Divine function. (2) The fact of His Resurrection, combined with the experience of Pentecost, enabled them to believe that He was still alive to give a personal inspiration to His disciples. Therein He was different from any prophet of the past; His Ascension to heaven was not a mere translation, but a unique

exaltation. (3) The requirement of Baptism "into His Name" distinguished Him from any human teacher. It implied union with Him as the way of union with God. It is worth while to remember that to the Jews "the Name" was a term of extraordinary significance. It was frequently used as almost an equivalent of the personality or character or nature of the person or thing named. And, in the New Testament, to believe in the Name of Jesus means to believe in and accept the claims of His Person.

The implications of the position thus ascribed to Jesus were not yet formulated in precise theological language. But all points unmistakably to the inference, that Jesus was preached as a unique Manifestation of God, as the One, through Whom man might come to God, know God, be partaker of the life of God, *i.e.* as the Way, the Truth, and the Life. The question whether He was God or man had not yet risen into consciousness. The dilemma had not yet been deliberately faced, "Can He be the full expression of God, unless He *is* God? Can He be the Saviour of man, unless He *is* man?" At present the Christians were content with their own undoubted experience of God in Christ, and of Salvation through His Name. That was their prime certainty. It resulted in doxology, the ascription of gratitude to Christ for this experience; and dogma soon followed. But, at first, it was enough for them to feel the conviction, born of personal experience, that in Him they came to know all that they needed to know about God, and to taste the grace that they did taste from God's hands.

In sum then, the first Christian preaching was that Jesus of Nazareth, Who had said and done such and such things, Who had been such and such an One, had been crucified, had risen from the dead, and been exalted to heaven; because this was so, therefore such as He had been, such He still was; and, as Lord and Christ, *i.e.* a unique Person fulfilling all God's promises and men's hopes for the redemption of mankind, and as such claiming all men's allegiance, He would return to judge and to consummate; and meanwhile He was able to inspire personally all who entered into the

sphere of His influence ; and in the inspiration of this union with Him men actually experienced the conviction of Salvation and the remission of their sins, and were enabled to make ready for His Return by a life after His pattern. As such He was preached. As such He was accepted by the first Christian converts. And they sealed their acceptance by being baptized. Baptism meant the entrance into the body of people of whom Jesus, the Christ, was the vitalizing Centre, the fellowship of those who believed union with Him to be the means of coming to God.

An early name, perhaps the earliest name, for the Christian Society was "the Way"; so we find it in Acts ix. 2, xix. 9, 23, xxii. 4. Baptism therefore was an entering into "the Way"; it was the rite by which a man was brought into the main stream of Jesus Christ's influence. "Be baptized, and (as the inevitable effect) ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." This effect was a matter of personal experience ; but it could only be verified by actually receiving Baptism. To this verification men were invited. Those who accepted the invitation found, in their own experience, that the promised result did take place. The Christian Gospel did prove to be the power of God unto salvation. Baptism did, as a matter of fact, prove to be the means of entering into a personal union with a living Christ. The conviction of such a union is the earliest element in Christianity. The readiness to be baptized was the sign that a man desired to come to God through Jesus Christ. And the actual effect of Baptism was that he was thus brought into living touch with Him, and in this communion experienced a new inspiration, a new force, a new life, which saved him from the sin which, in his former condition, had dominated his nature and his surroundings.

The requirements for Baptism were therefore Repentance and Faith. The two can be distinguished in analysis. Repentance was the decision to renounce the "crooked generation" of the outside world, the desire to find a means by which access to God could be more fully enjoyed. Faith was the conviction that in union

with Christ, within the circle of which He was the centre, this way to God, this salvation from sin, were actually attainable. But the process was really a single one; the convert turned out of the circle of the world, because he turned into the circle of the Christian Society. And it was a conscious, voluntary process. The earliest Church recruited none but adult volunteers. But, before long, the notion of family and household solidarity, which was so remarkably strong in both classical and Jewish life, led to a further development of practice. A man who wished to come to God by the Way of Christ, would wish his children also to be led into the same Way; he would bring them into the body of the Church as soon as possible, in order that they too might come within the stream of Christ's influence. The practice of infant Baptism, there can be little doubt, dates back to the Apostolic age. The Jewish law of Circumcision, the fact that Christ blessed little children, and the force of natural affection, were all in favour of its development. If there were children in the "households," of whose baptism we read in the New Testament (*cf.* Acts xvi. 15, 33), there was nothing to suggest even a doubt as to their admissibility to the rite. And all the evidence in the early Church writers shows that the baptism of infants was universally regarded as legitimate. Polycarp (martyred 155 A.D.) was almost certainly baptized in infancy; he states at his death that he had been for eighty-six years a servant of Christ. Justin Martyr (150 A.D.), Irenæus (180), Tertullian and Clement of Alexandria (about 200), the "Canons" of Hippolytus (about 230), Origen and Cyprian (both died between 250—260) all bear witness that the practice was considered perfectly lawful. On the other hand it is equally clear that, as a practice, it did not at once become universal. No direct ordinance of Christ or His Apostles is quoted to command it; and, even in the fourth century, some of the best Christian women, such as Anthusa and Monica, did not regard it as obligatory to have their children baptized in infancy. But gradually the practice became general. It was obviously in excellent accordance with the spirit of Christ's insti-

tution of Baptism as the means of making disciples ("Go ye, and make disciples, baptizing them," Matthew xxviii. 19). And it was also in accordance with the simple Christian belief, which experience verified and still verifies, that the fellowship of the baptized is the focus of Christ's life, that in the Church a man is in the main channel of His influence, in the main road of access to God. For every one who holds this belief, the natural inference is that it is well for everyone to be placed in that position as early as possible. But, if a child was brought into that stream, he must, to continue the metaphor, be taught to swim in it, and with it, and not against it. It was the Church's business to teach him; and a guarantee that this should be done was provided by the requirement of sponsors, themselves members of the Church, who should be responsible to the Church for the right upbringing of its youthful members. This system developed as soon as infant Baptism became at all general. And the position of sponsors is still in theory that of delegates of the Church for the special purpose, although a practice has been allowed to grow up which often tends to evaporate all reality out of the position.

This, then, was the Faith of the earliest Church. This in its simplest terms is the Catholic Faith, that in Jesus Christ the way to God is opened, the truth of God made known, the grace of God imparted, to men. Everything else in the Church's Creed is deduction from, interpretation or formulation of, this fundamental truth. The truth was believed on the basis of experience. The Church started with a conscious experience of God in Jesus Christ. However His position was stated, whether He was regarded as the Christ of prophecy, as the ascended and glorified Son, as the ideal fulfilment of all God's promises, as the Revelation of the eternal Word of God, in each case the experience which the language was meant to explain was—and still is—the same, *viz.* that in Jesus Christ God becomes real to man. That was, and is, the bed-rock conviction of the Christian Church. Everything else is but commentary upon it.

The development of such commentary was bound to

come. The experience was real ; the simple phrases, by which it was at first explained, amounted to little more than a statement of the experience itself. But Christian formula could not stop there. It was inevitable that the Church should go on to ask, what inferences this experience justified. Union with Christ was the road to God ; but what qualifications were needed for this union ? Was, for instance, the Jewish law to be taken over wholesale ? Jesus Christ had been a Jew. Was, then, Circumcision, *i.e.* naturalization into the historical Israel, essential ? If not, was the other, the Antinomian, extreme right ? Were Christians set free from all formal and external rules of morals, to seek guidance only from some inner light of the individual conscience ? Again, in Jesus Christ they knew God ; who or what then was Jesus ? Was He God or man ? Was He a God disguised in human appearance, a God, as it were, in masquerade of seeming humanity ? Or was He a man who had earned a deification ? Or was He neither of these, but something different from both, and unique ? What had He taught about Himself, and what had He meant by it ? He had called Himself Son of Man ; He had also made Himself equal with God ; were both claims real, or was one metaphorical ? He had spoken of a Spirit, which He was to send from the Father ; was there implied here a personal distinction, or was it merely the personification of an influence ?

Another problem too, which was bound to arise before long, was that of preserving a correct record of Jesus' sayings and doings. Eye-witnesses, who had " accompanied with " Him, would die ; memory might prove uncertain ; and imagination might need to be restrained. The Apocryphal Gospels, which still survive, show clearly enough how grave was the danger of fancy portraits of Jesus coming into circulation. And it was no trivial matter. If the authentic tradition of His life and character was lost, what test was there by which true inspiration could be distinguished from false ? Christian prophecy was a gift of the ascended Christ. " The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy " (Revelation xix. 10). But how could charlatanism and pretence be

detected or corrected, if the historical record of Jesus' life was lost or adulterated ?

Such problems had to be faced. The Christians had no wish to theorize. They were content with the simple experience, which they shared as a Society, of God in Christ, and with the simple expression of that experience. But if theories were started, they must be examined. And there was only one criterion to apply ; did the theory correspond with the experience of the Society ? This was the test, alike of the experience of individuals, and of all proposed formulæ of expression. The vital necessity was to safeguard the facts of which their own common experience had persuaded them. No theory, no form of words, was tolerable, which might be inferred to exclude or ignore any part of that truth. It might seem a simple explanation ; but by this test it might be seen to be more plain than true. Of one fact they were quite sure, that in Jesus Christ God became real to them ; and, however difficult it might be to find words which explained this experience, they would not be satisfied with any which did not.

Thus it is that the second stage in the development of the Church's Creed is that of questioning, deduction, and explanation. This stage is first seen in progress, on one side, in the Epistles of the New Testament. In these we notice the process by which the inferences of the Church's Faith are gradually moulded, and the position of Christ in the universe is gradually formulated. The process is not on any lines of preconceived philosophy. The experience is mistress. In Christ the Church knew God. The question was, what this fact involved as to Christ and God. On another side, the same stage is shown in the growth of Gospels, *i.e.* of records of Jesus' life on earth, of His teaching, and of the impression which His Personality had given. Their purpose is to catch the first-hand testimony before it could grow vague, to guard the historical life from the defacing hand of pious fancy or sentimental imagination. It is usual to point out that the New Testament contains rudimentary Creeds ; and this is true enough. But, still more truly, the very New Testament itself as a whole is a Creed in

process of formulation. The great Christian experience of a living Christ, the impression of Whose character survived in a living tradition, had to be safeguarded. And, to fulfil this need, Gospels arise to preserve the tradition of what He had been on earth, and Epistles are written to direct any inferences that may be made, and to keep them consistent with the Church's belief. Many other Gospels were written and circulated, besides the four which are in our Bibles, many Epistles besides those which we call "canonical." Some of these have been lost by accident, but many still survive, deliberately excluded from the Christian Canon of Holy Scripture. And it was the great general body of Church opinion, working gradually in successive generations, which made the selection. Some books, once popular and highly reputed (the "Shepherd" of Hermas is the most notable example), eventually came to be regarded as unworthy of an authoritative position in the Canon. Others, at one time little known (*e.g.* the Epistle of St. James), eventually won their way to general acceptance. In each particular case, it was the Church itself which decided the degree of esteem which it was willing to attach to any book; and its decision was dictated by its feeling that the book was or was not faithful to the standard of the Church's tradition. In the last resort, the mind of the Church at large was the living oracle; and the canonical books are the selection, which that mind was willing to accept as written oracles.

Side by side with this development of Christian literature goes the development of Christian Creeds, as convenient formulæ for the guidance of teachers in the instruction of those who desired to be baptized. The Creeds are often called summaries of the New Testament. But this does not mean that the New Testament was first completed, and afterwards summarized in a formula. The Creeds are really summaries of the same Church tradition, of which the New Testament is the documentary expression. And in the case of the Creeds, as of the books, a process of selection went on. First one formula was tried and then another; one church borrowed

suggestions from another ; different forms of words were used in different places. And, in this case too, it was the Church at large, which itself picked out the formulæ that best accorded with its tradition. In this process of selection, four stages can roughly be distinguished ; (1) Speculation, (2) Controversy, (3) Decision, (4) Acceptance. Theories were expounded, discussed, accepted, rejected, modified, explained anew, until their real relation to the Church's tradition became apparent. Then the leaders of the Church met to decide on the issues ; and, if necessary, they sanctioned a particular form of words as corresponding to the Church's Faith. But even then the matter was not finished. The Church might accept or reject or ignore the decision ; and time alone could show whether a particular decision would win its way, or would be quietly shelved, or would have to be modified, by a subsequent Council, to some formula with which the Church would be better satisfied.

The history of the dispute about Circumcision supplies one illustration of this process. The first three stages are set forth in Acts xv. The Council decides that Gentiles need not be circumcised, but this is not accepted until after very much more controversy and dissension. Eventually, the decision wins its own way, and the rule as to the sufficiency of Baptism without Circumcision becomes universal. Another illustration comes from the debate in the end of the third century as to the relation of Jesus Christ to God. Here too, the decision of the Nicene Council is only triumphant after much subsequent controversy. It is plain that the Church's Creeds reached their formulation by no decision of a great leader, by no findings of a Parliament of leaders, but by the slow workings of the Church's mind in generation after generation, and the elimination of all language which did not commend itself to the Church as a whole, as adequately protecting the truth which had been held from the beginning.

As we realize the nature of this process, we realize also the nature of the Creeds. They are not the product of a series of guesses at truth. The Church believed

that the truth had been already given to it ; and its one object, in framing Creeds, was to find words in which this truth should be not unfaithfully expressed. Herein lies the value of these Creeds. They are the formulæ which the mind of the Christian Church, after hearing all sorts of alternatives, eventually accepted as corresponding with its tradition. Their language is, of course, capable of being misunderstood. There is no reason to deny that a formula less liable to misunderstanding might conceivably be discovered. But the Church has to see to it that no re-statement of the Creeds shall be tolerated, merely because it seems to be more simple, if it does not correspond at least as well with the truth which the Church has received from tradition and still finds true in its experience. " The language of the Church represents a real force ; if there is better language to express that force, let us have it by all means ; but if the better language leaves out, as sometimes happens when tales are improved, the gist of the whole story, then the old language will be nearer the fact. The Christian Church has tried again and again to express what most it means in other language, but it has not succeeded ; it can find no other account of love and power than that they are bound up with Jesus Christ."¹ Before anyone seeks to re-write the Creeds, let him make sure that he understands them, that he knows by his own experience what is the truth which they are meant to express. The challenge of the Christian Church is still to verification from within. And this challenge has a weight of authority behind it that may well make a true man pause, before he ignores it, or courts the judgment on sacrilege by a self-satisfied half-heartedness of experiment. For the Church's Creed states a Faith, which Christian souls throughout the centuries have accepted. It states the truth, which from the beginning the Church has held for true, because it found that it proved itself to any who really tested it, *viz.* that in Jesus Christ God is known, found lovable, and loved, and that in loving Him man finds his own true self and the peace of his soul.

¹ Glover. " The Christian Tradition." Lect. V ad fin.

II.

THE FORMULÆ OF THE FAITH

“**B**E baptized in the Name of Jesus Christ” is St. Peter’s invitation to his hearers on the day of Pentecost. Baptism, on the side of the individual, was the acceptance by the convert of a specific relation to Christ ; on the corporate side, it was the acceptance by the Church of a new member to share in its common relation to Christ. It was natural, therefore, that the candidate for membership, the “catechumen,” as he was called, should first be asked whether he understood what the relation meant, and whether he really desired to enter into it, *i.e.* should be asked to profess his faith in Jesus Christ. The requirement was a test of his sincerity ; by such a profession he openly committed himself to his new position. This aspect of Baptism has been largely forgotten in lands where Christianity has become the established, or at least the conventional, religion ; and in England, moreover, where it has become customary to administer Holy Baptism with an absence of publicity that gives the administration an almost surreptitious character, this unfortunate practice has contributed to blot out almost entirely any recognition of Baptism as a public confession of Christ. But, in lands where membership in the Church excites violent opposition, where Christianity still appears “to turn the world upside down,” *e.g.* in India, the requirement of public Baptism is still a tremendously real test, and no mean courage and earnestness are needed to face the social consequences that may, and do, follow on its acceptance.

These baptismal declarations of Faith are the germ of all Christian Creeds. A man who was to profess his faith at his baptism would naturally be supplied with some form of words in which to do so, and its meaning would be explained to him in previous instruction. Thus, short summaries of the Christian Faith would come to be drawn up. Their wording would vary in

various places, but their general outline must have been similar. The earliest forms were of course the simplest ; “ I believe in the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost ” (such a formula is perhaps indicated in the baptismal commission of Matthew xxviii. 19), or “ I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God ” (a primitive form preserved in some ancient MSS. of Acts viii. 37), or some such phrase. But expansion soon began ; the desire for picturesqueness or fullness or precision would lead to elaboration. Language like St. Paul’s “ One God, the Father, of Whom are all things and we unto Him ; and One Lord, Jesus Christ, through Whom are all things and we through Him ” (1 Corinthians viii. 6), or “ Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and was buried, and hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures ” (ib. xv. 3), is the prototype of fuller Creeds. The process of expansion continued. And, as communication between churches developed, and they could compare their respective Creeds and borrow suitable phrases from one another, the Creeds tended little by little to assume everywhere a similar type. A few quotations from the main early baptismal Confessions will make this more plain ;—

(1) The early Creed of the Church in Rome, as we find in a writing of 390 A.D., ran as follows ; “ I believe in God the Father Almighty ; and in Christ Jesus His only Son, our Lord, Who was born of the Holy Ghost, from the Virgin Mary, was crucified under Pontius Pilate and was buried ; He rose again the third day from the dead ; He ascended into Heaven, He sitteth on the right hand of the Father ; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead ; and in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Church, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the flesh.” This form is preserved for us by Rufinus, a presbyter of Aquileia in Northern Italy, who at the same time tells us that the Creed of his own Church of Aquileia differed from that of Rome in three respects ; (a) it added the adjectives “ invisible and impassible ” to the Name of the Father ; (b) it added the statement “ descended into Hell ” ; (c) it spoke of “ the resurrection of *this* flesh.” The Roman

Creed is also preserved for us by Marcellus of Ancyra (A.D. 341) in the same form as Rufinus gives it, with the following exceptions ; (a) it begins " I believe in God Almighty, and in Jesus Christ His only-begotten Son our Lord, Who was born of the Holy Ghost and of the Virgin Mary " ; (b) it ends with the addition of " the life eternal."

(2) Niceta, bishop of Remesiana in Dacia (375 A.D.), preserves the Creed of his Church in this form ; " I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and earth ; and in His Son Jesus Christ, Who was born of the Holy Ghost and of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified and dead ; He rose the third day alive from the dead ; He ascended into Heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father ; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead ; and in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the flesh, and the life eternal."

(3) The Creed of the Church at Jerusalem, as we have it recorded in a work of Cyril (347 A.D.), was more elaborate ; " We believe in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible ; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father, very God, before all worlds, by Whom all things were made ; Who was incarnate, and was made man, was crucified and was buried, and rose again the third day, and sat at the right hand of the Father, and is coming in glory to judge the quick and the dead, Whose Kingdom shall have no end ; and in one Holy Ghost, the Paraclete, who spake in the prophets, and in one baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, and in one holy Catholic Church, and in the resurrection of the flesh, and in the life eternal."

(4) At the Nicene Council in 325 A.D., Eusebius, the bishop of Cæsarea, stated that the baptismal Creed of his Church ran as follows ; " We believe in One God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible ; and in One Lord Jesus Christ, the Word of God, God of God, Light of Light, Life of Life, the only-

begotten Son, before all worlds begotten of the Father, by Whom also all things were made ; Who for our salvation was made flesh, and lived among men, and suffered, and rose again the third day, and ascended to the Father, and will come again in glory to judge the quick and the dead ; and we believe also in One Holy Ghost."

(5) The Creed of N. Africa is gathered from the works of Tertullian (200 A.D.) ; we can see that its statements were of the same character as those of the other Creeds that have been quoted ; but, as Tertullian gives us the gist of the Creed in a running exposition, we cannot be sure of its exact phraseology.

(6) The Declaration of faith of St. Jerome (about 377 A.D.) is a private profession, and not a baptismal Creed ; but, as he had travelled in most of Asia Minor, before settling in Syria, it is probable that he has made a compilation from the official forms which he found in the various churches that he had visited. His declaration contains in substance every clause of our present Apostles' Creed.

These specimens¹ show both how the statement of the Christian Faith varied in various parts of Christendom, and also the identity of substance which underlay all the differences of phrase. The same Christian belief was always at the back of all attempts at formulation ; but the Church was still unconsciously in process of searching for such a declaration as should express the main convictions which it held, simply, and withal definitely, enough to be universally satisfactory.

The Apostles' Creed, as we possess it, is the fully-grown representative of this early type. It represents the finally agreed form of the primitive baptismal "Symbol," as these professions of faith came to be called, because they were the "watchword" of the Christian soldier, entrusted to him on his enlistment into the Church. In its exact present form, with all the clauses that it includes, this Creed is not found before the middle of the eighth century. But its origin can be traced undoubtedly

¹ The originals of these, and of other early Creeds, may be seen in Swete's book on the Apostles' Creed, or in Gibson's on *The Three Creeds*.

to the old baptismal Creed of the Church at Rome (the first of the forms quoted above); and scholars are generally agreed that that formula goes back to the year 150 A.D. or even earlier.¹ This old Creed was expanded, between the fifth and eighth centuries, by borrowings, whether direct or indirect, from the ancient Creeds of other Churches. The most interesting of such additions are the clauses (1) "He descended into Hell"; this, as we have seen, existed in the Creed of the Church of Aquileia by 390 A.D., and had probably been there for a long time before that date; it is also in St. Jerome's profession of faith (No. 6 of the above references): (2) "the Communion of Saints," a clause found in the Creed of Niceta and in St. Jerome's profession (Nos. 2 and 6 above), and received in Gaul by the end of the fifth century.² Thus, as it stands, the Apostles' Creed is an expansion of the venerable Roman Creed by the addition of clauses from other early Creeds. The title is first found in the writings of St. Ambrose, bishop of Milan, 374-397 A.D.; and, though the Creed was unquestionably not composed by the Apostles, no better summary of the Apostolic teaching in its simplest form could have been made. As such, it will be the basis of our exposition in the following chapter.

The Nicene Creed is of a different type, and represents the product of a development which began in the fourth century. When controversy about Christian truth became rife, and essential elements in the Christian Faith seemed likely to be misinterpreted in the interests of special theories, it became needful to elaborate the simpler Creed, by the insertion of words or clauses to safeguard the primitive belief. This was the work of the Church Councils; and the Creed, thus expanded, began to be used as a test of orthodoxy. Such a formula is necessarily more elaborate. The Nicene Creed, which

¹ Some good authorities even carry it back to about 100 A.D. Allusions to it are found in Felix, bishop of Rome 269-274 A.D., Dionysius and Novatian, both of Rome, about 250; perhaps also in Tertullian (No. 5 above), and in earlier writings.

² *E.g.* it is found in the Creed recorded by Faustus, bishop of Riez, who died 492 A.D.

was intended to be, and still is, used in the full worship of the Christian Society, is obviously different in tone from the Apostles' Creed, which was for use at the admission of new members into the Society. But the truth declared in both types of formula is precisely the same, *viz.* the truth about God in Jesus Christ, which the Church had always held. All that has been done is to amplify the statement of it, and to emphasize its significance.

This Creed takes its name from Nicæa, where in the year 325 a Council of 318 bishops from all parts of Christendom was called by the Emperor Constantine, to decide the controversy as to the Nature of Christ. The bishops probably took as their basis of discussion the Creed of the Church of Cæsarea (No. 4 above), but added to it certain phrases in order to guard the belief in Christ's essential Godhead. Other additions, especially to the third paragraph, were made in the middle of the fourth century, clauses being borrowed from the Creed of the Church of Jerusalem (No. 3 above), and perhaps from other sources. The Creed, so expanded, was sanctioned as orthodox by the Council of Constantinople in 381, and fully recognized, seventy years later, by the Council of Chalcedon.

These two Creeds were, definitely and with intention, formulated by the Church as a whole. *The Athanasian Creed* is the work of an individual writer, and is intended as a hymn or canticle rather than as a regular Creed; though the Church found it (as missionaries now find it) so admirable an exposition of doctrine, that it gave it practically œcumenical authority; but in its original intention it is certainly different from the other two Creeds. The identity of its author is uncertain. It is certainly not by St. Athanasius, who lived in the first half of the fourth century; indeed it is not even ascribed to him till the ninth century. It was not composed before the year 416, when St. Augustine's work on the Trinity was published, for it bears plain evidence of acquaintance with that treatise. In the ninth century it was already regarded as a work of antiquity. The opinion of scholars tends strongly to hold that it must

be by a Gallican writer, and comes from a date between 420 and 600 A.D., and more probably from the fifth than the sixth century.

This Creed, and its public use in Church, have been the object of violent attacks from many quarters; and some consideration of the current objections to it cannot here be wholly omitted. (1) It is accused of containing metaphysical terms; and it is quite true that its language is more redolent of the philosophical text-book than that of the other Creeds. But, so far as positive purpose goes, the Creed attempts no metaphysical explanations. Indeed the principal motive for the Church's definition of dogma was generally, not the desire to explain, but the necessity of correcting speculative explanations which were actually coming into vogue. And so this Creed is mainly a series of refusals to define the nature of the Godhead and the method of the Incarnation. It uses philosophical terms, only in order to warn us that philosophical theories are inadequate to explain the mysteries of the Christian Faith. Its direct object is simply to safeguard one supreme conviction, *viz.* that both Reason and Revelation must be true: (a) Reason, which says that God is One; Revelation, which shows the existence of real and eternal distinctions in the Godhead; (b) Reason, which says that Jesus is Man; Revelation, which says that He is also God. So the Creed asserts its two formulæ, "One God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity," "God and Man is one Christ," not professing to explain the doctrines, but declaring them as formulæ which actually hold together the teachings alike of Reason and Revelation. Human beings can form no picture or conception of the mode of Triune existence, nor of the nature of an Incarnate Deity. But the Athanasian Creed simply says "Such is God, such is Christ, to be worshipped as such." It rejects all explanations which would make God or Christ easy to understand; such explanations would not provide us with a God Who was an adequate object of loving adoration, nor with a Christ Who was an adequate medium of Salvation; therefore they do not correspond with the Revelation of God in Christ; and there-

fore they do not square with Christian experience. The Athanasian Creed leaves us with a God and a Christ Who are indeed beyond our understanding, but Who are adequate to our worship and faith; and so it is consistent with Christian experience, which knows Whom it worships and in Whom it believes, and knows also that it does and can only in part understand Him.

(2) The second and more violent objection to the Creed is on the score of those clauses in it which are called damnatory, minatory, or monitory, according to the degree of significance which is attributed to their language. To threaten eternal damnation to one who cannot understand the Athanasian formula, seems neither reasonable nor Christian. Now, it must be openly asserted that these clauses are unfortunately phrased. (a) The language is inaccurate as a translation of the original Latin. Thus, in verse 1, the true sense is "Whosoever desires to be saved, before all things it is necessary that he keep hold of the Catholic Faith," and in verse 29 "believe rightly" should rather be "believe faithfully." A condemnation of ignorant unbelief is not here implied; the thought is of the value of fidelity and the sin of apostasy. As we have seen, the early Church spoke of itself as "the Way." These clauses warn us that he who would be in the Way must scrupulously follow the directions. There are several other verses, in which a more accurate translation would mitigate the harshness which our ears discover in the English version. (b) The language suggests, though it does not necessitate, an interpretation which is really un-Christian in spirit; no little education and power of discrimination are needed to appreciate the considerations which justify the different and more Christian interpretation. (c) Further, a large number of those who vigorously defend the Creed, feel unable to defend the rubric which directs its present use in public worship. There seems to be no ancient authority for using it as a substitute for the Apostles' Creed; and, being a canticle, it ought not to be used as if it were a Creed. If retranslated, its occasional use, as a canticle,

would not be unsuitable. But the Church is defeating its own object, if it insists on retaining a use which certainly increases prejudice and has no obvious justification or propriety.

But, if we wish to appraise rightly the bearing of this document, we must go below the phraseology of these clauses to ask, what is the purpose which they are meant to serve. Do they, however crudely and baldly, state a truth? In reply to this question, we may note, (1) that the "faith," of which the necessity is emphasized, is no mere intellectual apprehension. This formula does nothing so absurd as to require philosophical intelligence as a condition of Salvation. The faith, of which it speaks, is one which shows itself in worship and in works. "The Catholic Faith is that we worship"; and "they that have done good will go into life everlasting, and they that have done evil into everlasting fire." This is no trivial truth, that worship and conduct are the necessary expression of faith. (2) From another point of view, the formula asserts a fact of tremendous importance, when it emphasizes the value of correct belief, *i.e.* of right ideas about God. This is the gist, also, of the 2nd Commandment. Nothing is easier to man than the lapse into idolatry, which is essentially the holding of wrong ideas about God. If Heaven is the state of perfect union with God, we can only attain such a state, when we know Him truly, with a knowledge which is an affair, not of the intellect alone, but of the whole life. We have to acquire this knowledge both here and hereafter; and we shall not be finally perfected until it has been acquired. This is the fact that inspires the vehement affirmations of these clauses, though the language, in which the fact is stated, is strained to a violence which does its protest a disservice. The clauses do not bid us judge individuals, though they sound as if they did; nor do they forbid us to believe that men are judged according to their opportunities. But they state the law, that to be unfaithful to the truth is sinful, that the rejection of truth is a sin, as much as the violation of the moral law; and sin brings punishment, and final impenitence means

final punishment. On the subject of punishment the Creed imposes on us no theory of its own. It says nothing for which parallels may not be quoted from the Bible itself. The way in which the language of the Bible is to be understood gives the rule for the understanding of the similar language in this Creed. Just as our Articles declare that the statements in the Creed "may be proved by most certain warrants of Holy Scripture," so the Synods of the English Church have more than once declared that "the warnings in this Confession of Faith are to be understood no otherwise than the like warnings in Holy Scripture." But the Creed does remind us of a particular aspect of sin, *viz.* that wilful denial of what is true is as sinful, and therefore as damnable, as wilful disobedience of what is right. And this is a most solemn truth, the affirmation of which is never unnecessary. It is very easy to fall into an attitude of mind, for which there exist no convictions but only opinions, all of which may be regarded as more or less equally true, *ergo* more or less equally false; and this attitude, by emasculation of the sense of truth, tends to sap the very basis of morality. As a protest against this tendency the monitory clauses of the Athanasian Creed still have a value, which the vehemence of their language does not entirely destroy; whilst its doctrinal statements are still a bulwark against the seductive heresies, which are always recurring, because they appear so logical, and are always false, because they are so inadequate to explain Christian experience.

We have seen that the primary truth, from which the Church started, was that in Christ men had access to, and union with, God; and that the Creeds grew out of the desire to guard the tradition which interpreted this truth. In course of reflection and discussion the Church was led to infer (1) that Christ must be Divine; and so men could argue from His Incarnate life to the character and purpose of God; God was like Jesus Christ: (2) that Christ must be Human; and so men could argue from Him to the true nature and destiny of Man; Man was, essentially, like Jesus Christ. Further, His teaching revealed in the Godhead the distinctions of

Father, Son, and Spirit ; and Christians could, and did, experience in actual life the grace of Jesus Christ, the love of the Father, and the fellowship of the Spirit. So verifying the Lord's teaching by the only sufficient test, the Church arrived at the formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity. The formulæ of the Creeds are designed to state these doctrines, in which the Christian tradition is safeguarded. This is true of the Apostles' and the Nicene Creeds ; and the purpose of the Athanasian Creed is no other ; but, in this last, the effort to exclude misinterpretations is pushed further, while the monitory clauses are warnings, couched in fierce language, against the danger of tampering with the truth. Matthew Arnold described this Creed as "learned science, with a strong dash of temper."¹ The "temper" is undeniable. If we are disposed (and probably many of us are disposed) to think the language too fierce, at least it is refreshing to find, in the writer of this Creed, a man who can be fiercely zealous in the cause of the sacredness of truth. A man who, enjoying the Christian experience, is convinced that the Christian doctrine is its only adequate interpretation, may be excused for a display of "temper" in emphasizing the importance of this doctrine. It might even be no matter of regret, if more of us modern Christians were such as to need some allowance to be made for us on this score. I once heard Mr. Chesterton aver that, whereas a Christian of the early type said and felt, "I know I am not good, but I am quite sure that I am right," the Christian of the modern type is more apt to feel, even if he does not say, "I am good enough, but I am not at all sure that I am right." The remark has a pungent truth ; and it indicates both one of the reasons for the distaste which men nowadays so often feel for the Athanasian Creed, and also the reason why the Creed is still of service. It stands as the profession of a faith which is really convinced, and so as an antidote to the influence of that invertebrate type of religion, which is so frequent to-day.

¹ See G. W. E. Russell. "Life of Matthew Arnold." Chapter VI. ad fin.

III. THE APOSTLES' CREED

PART I.

I believe in God, the Father, Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth.

THE terms are commonplaces of many, indeed of most, religions. This clause, taken by itself, might be regarded as the highest point reached by the religious instinct of mankind; as the meeting-point of all the higher religions, the greatest common measure of universal religion. But such a way of regarding it is superficially attractive rather than fundamentally true. For (1) although many religions use the phrases of this clause to express their conception of God, it cannot be said that all attach the same meaning to them. The Buddhist thinks of Divine Omnipotence in a different way from the Christian. The Mohammedan and the Christian both call God "Father," but with a profound difference in significance. A greatest common measure of all religions can only be attained by accepting phrases as equivalent to ideas—a course which is as easy and common as it is misleading. And (2) this clause in the Christian Creed is not to be taken by itself. The Christian Faith is not an eclectic assemblage of disconnected "articles," like the objects on the tray in a Boy Scout's "Kim game." It is a structural unity, in which each "article" is organically connected with the others. We do not accept a view of God from natural religion or any other religion, and then add to this a particular doctrine, called Christian, as to God's Revelation of Himself. We accept Christ as the Revelation of God. We learn in Christ to believe in God as Father, as Maker, as Almighty; and Christ's Revelation is for us decisive as to the meaning that we attach to these terms. We believe in God, the Father, Almighty; Maker of Heaven and Earth, ultimately because Christ

showed God to be such ; and we believe God to be such, only in the sense which Christ's Revelation sanctions.

This clause, therefore, as it stands in the Creed, is an item in the Christian Revelation, and its meaning for Christians depends on that Revelation. Now there is no doubt that in Christ's Revelation the absolutely supreme truth is the character of God's Fatherhood. Through Christ the idea of Fatherhood is shown to lie in the very nature of the Godhead. He is "the Father, from whom every fatherhood in heaven and on earth is named" (Ephesians iii. 15). And this means that Love is the supreme attribute of His character, alone primary, while power, discipline, and everything else are secondary. "God is Love." This truth is the core of the whole of Our Lord's teaching ; and His Life was the final manifestation of a God Who is Love. If God then is primarily Love, He has needed from all eternity an object for His Love ; and from eternity His Son has been begotten as the object of His Love, and as the One Who makes perfect response to it. His begetting was by no material or physical process ; as an eternal act, it cannot have taken place in time, and is of course inconceivable to us. But, so far as human language can state such a notion (and it can only do so by metaphor), the Son is a Being of eternally derived essence, eternal but communicated. God has been from eternity Father as much as God. And the existence of an Eternal Son is a necessity to an Eternal Father.

This idea of God's Fatherhood as a Fatherhood of Love, is the Revelation of Christ. And it governs the meaning of all other attributes which we ascribe to God. He is Maker of Heaven and Earth, the supreme Cause of all Creation, the originator and sustainer of all existence. So many a religion and many a philosophy has said. But the Christian Faith unites the attribute of Maker with that of Father, and thereby declares its belief that God's purpose in Creation was a purpose of Love. Philosophy can argue to the necessity of a self-determining Will at the back of the universe ; it can reason that, right through all life, Causation originates in

Will, and that human thought, from its own experience, which is the only experience that it knows, can conceive of no other form of Causation. But it cannot prove, nor indeed make more than possible, any particular view as to the character of that Will. Christianity, declaring that this Will is for Love, because it is the Will of the Father, is much more concerned to assert its belief in a loving Providence, than to assert a belief in a Supreme Cause. And so, according to the Christian belief, God's relation to mankind is not one merely of Creator to creatures, but of loving Creator to loved creatures, of Father to children, of One whose relation to us is filled with the sense that we need Him, and with the eagerness to meet our need.

For the central thing in Love, as the mother of an afflicted child well knows, is not our need of others, but the sense that others need us. Yet, though Love is primarily that which gives and not that which asks, the need is of course mutual, and must be felt as mutual. And in the Love even of God for man, God's need of man has a place. He is not indifferent or superior to the affection of His own creatures. Of this truth the life of Jesus Christ is the final assurance. If in one aspect it shows God's Love for man, in another aspect it shows, no less truly, God's desire to be loved by man, the Father's craving for the love of His children. Thus, God is not only the Eternal Father of the Eternal Son. He is also, in time, the Father of mankind. Indeed this was probably the notion of God's Fatherhood, at which the Christians first arrived; and the notion of God's eternal Fatherhood of an eternally-begotten Son was only later reached by them, as a necessary inference from the belief in the eternity of God's characteristic essence of Love.

The idea of Fatherhood similarly governs the sense in which Christians can regard God as Almighty. We must beware of being led astray into a merely metaphysical notion of Omnipotence. Historically, the adjective in the Creed represents the Latin *Omnipotens*, the Greek *παντοκράτωρ*, and is most accurately translated "All-Sovereign." No suggestion of Omnipotence,

as meaning ability to do anything and everything, is to be found in the word.

But the Almightyness of God has too often been interpreted in isolation from His Fatherhood. It has been held, *e.g.* by Calvinists, that God *can* do anything whatever; that He can will evil and harm, can abolish sin by a *fiat*, or can punish sinners by unending torture; that He can predestine men to be damned for no reason save His own arbitrary Will; that He possesses absolute, unlimited, coercive Power, and it is only in accordance with His own Will that He does not always exercise it. This interpretation of Divine Omnipotence has raised endless obstacles to belief. The question is, in one form or another, ceaselessly recurring, "Why, if God the Father is Omnipotent, does He not do this or that obviously desirable thing by the exercise of His autocratic Power?" *E.g.* why does He not stop war, or some particular war? Why does He allow Bill Sykes to beat his wife and ill-treat his children? Why does He permit the existence of slums and poverty and luxury, and drunkenness and impurity, and money-worship and selfishness? Why does He not at a stroke abolish all human sin? And the usual answer is, that God has voluntarily limited His own Power by the gift of human free-will. The answer, though sound so far as it goes, scarcely goes far enough to account fully for the phenomena of evil. Of all philosophic problems the origin of evil is the most inscrutable. We are much more concerned with its existence than with its origin. To say that it is merely absence of good, may be philosophically correct, but is not practically helpful; and though belief in the existence of the, or of a, Devil is not one of the articles of the Creed, such belief accords with our personal experience. Evil, as we know it, seems to have a personal malignity. And, as we trace the work of God in history, there is throughout the element of struggling forces directed against one another by some sort of Mind or spiritual intelligence. God seems to be working His purpose out against opposition, however this opposition is to be explained. Here, as elsewhere, the Church rules out the easy explanation of eternally

rival powers. By asserting God's Almightyness the Church asserts that ultimately God's purpose must prevail; and we are called to be fellow-workers with God.

We have no right, on the Christian theory, to think of Omnipotence by itself as an attribute of God. We go wrong, if we imagine that He once possessed absolute Power, of which something involved in the creation of man is the only limitation. God's Power has from eternity been limited by His own Character. We may grant that the limitation is a moral one; but to God a moral necessity is a metaphysical necessity. He simply *cannot* do that which is not consistent with His Character of Perfect Love. It is a task beyond human powers to apply this thought to God's dealings with the universe at large; we can only understand those dealings at all, so far as they concern mankind. But we must boldly say that, in relation to man, God has never been able to exercise coercion or to force the result that He wishes, simply because such a method would have been wholly out of keeping with His Character as Father. The old argument of Celsus, in objection to the statement that God can do anything, that "God cannot be false to His own moral character, nor defy His own laws," is perfectly sound. God is not Omnipotent and Loving separately. He is Omnipotent only in so far as Divine Love can be. He cannot do what His own Character forbids. He *can* only do what a perfectly loving Father should do; and that He *must* do; His Character is the world's Fate. He does not violate human free-will, because He cannot. For Him to do so would mean that He had ceased to be perfect Love. His purpose and His desire is that man should love Him. He created man free to love or not to love Him. For Him to coerce man would be to make Him less than man, *i.e.* to stultify His own purpose of Love, to ruin for ever His chance of being spontaneously loved by man. God therefore cannot abolish sin or stop war or evil by any exercise of force. He can only win His Will by loving sinners. His Power is not absolute, in the sense that He could coerce if He would, but He will not. God's only Power is that of Eternal Love, eternally working, pleading,

persuading, by methods of Love alone. And if there be such a thing as a final impenitence of man, a final hostility of man to God, it is its own punishment. Men punish themselves. Man can perhaps forfeit all capacity of loving God, but God cannot cease to love every man, whether he be responsive or no.

But, if this be so, what grounds have we for calling God the Father "Almighty"? The answer is twofold. (1) God's Love is morally invincible; it is unconquered by enmity; it refuses for ever to desist from loving; it refuses to work except by the methods of love; it refuses to cease trying to win the response of love. And further, (2) we believe that God's Love will eventually win its Will. In reaching this victory, God will do nothing contrary to that which a perfect Father should do; and nothing will be left save that which completely squares with His purpose of perfect Love. Evil will be utterly abolished. God's Love will eventually prove to be invincible Power, and all that is opposed to it will be conquered. We do not know how this victory will be attained. We only insist on believing that "all's to come right in the end." "All is right. I am sure of it. I don't believe one of us has any idea how well God is going to manage it." "I mean when I say all's to come right in the end, that it will do so in some sense absolutely inconceivable by us—so inconceivable that the simple words I use to express it may then have ceased to mean anything, or anything worth recording, to our expanded senses." The quotations are from Doctor Thorpe's musings in William De Morgan's novel "Joseph Vance." And I know no words which express more simply the inner meaning of the Christian belief that God the Father is Almighty.

This belief, that God's Love will eventually prevail entirely, raises at once the question as to human free-will, and the possibility of its final antagonism to God. The dilemma is utterly insoluble in theory. For, in theory, if man is free to choose whether to love God or not, he may for ever choose not to love Him; and God cannot force him to choose otherwise. And again, in theory, if any one man persists for ever in refusing to

love God, God is defeated; He aimed at winning by love the response of love, and He failed; His Love is not Almighty. But it may be that God will solve the dilemma in practice, by the sheer force of His loving, a force which will be all the more intense, as the man's need of God increases. It may eventually turn out, that God's Love, simply by its own native strength and purity, will win its response from all that it loves.

That God's Love will follow men into the next world is certain; God cannot cease to love any single one of His children. May it be that God will eventually love them out of their self-inflicted misery, will love them all until they love Him back? This is a mere speculation; the Church has never dogmatized the meaning of Eternal Punishment. The suggestion that has been made is but an inference from the belief in the eventual Omnipotence of God's Love; and the inference may be mistaken; though it can hardly be more mistaken than the conventional (it can no longer be called popular) idea of Hell, according to which God will for ever torture the impenitent, although all prospect of their repentance is for ever at an end—a theory which displays a curiously distorted notion of God's Love, and of the purpose of His punishments. If Hell be the final state of any, then it would seem that it can only be the place of dead souls, not of souls that are alive enough to suffer, the home of the spiritual suicides and not of the spiritually tormented. But, in fact, the final fate of the finally impenitent is too mysterious and awful a subject to be dogmatized about.¹ It may be that I have already said more than a wise reverence would approve on such a subject. We can hardly forbear entirely to speculate about it; but we can scarcely be too cautious in speculation on such a topic, where the truth must be quite beyond our present powers of conception or even of imagination. But, at least, if we must preserve the utmost modesty in the inferences which we draw from our general belief, we can, none the less, be quite convinced of that belief itself; *viz.* (1) that nothing can

¹ See Church's sermon on "Sin and Judgment" in "Human Life and its Conditions."

make God cease to love any single one of His children ; (2) that the " Divine event to which the whole Creation moves " will be one when (by methods of a Love inconceivable to us) all will come right, God's Love will be vindicated, and nothing will prove to have been anything but an item in the process by which Perfect Love wins its perfect fulfilment.

The meaning of this first clause of the Creed may now be summed up. " I believe in God, the Father, Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth." I believe in an eternal purpose for love at work behind and in the universe. I believe that Love is the regulative principle of the universe, of its origin, its continuance, and its end, " that what the soul of man recognises as the highest ideal is at the same time the deepest reality of the world."¹ And this Love is the characteristic of a God Who is Himself personal ; *i.e.* whatever His Nature may be in itself (and that must necessarily transcend all human categories whatsoever), He is able to enter into personal relations with man, and to make His Love work by personal influence on us. I believe, therefore, in a God Who is Love. Because He is eternally Love, therefore there is an eternal object for His Love, which is His eternally-begotten Son. In time He created the universe to express His purpose of Love ; He sustains it in being by His Love ; He will mould it to an end satisfactory to His Love.

This is the great venture of Faith. There is much that seems to refute it ; there is nothing in Nature that proves it, for the voice of Nature speaks uncertainly as to the Love of God. " Natural religion " had guessed something of this truth. The human soul at its highest seems to demand this belief ; without it, the world seems intolerable ; the belief is congruous to human nature. But the disclosure of its full meaning, and the assurance of its truth, is the work of Jesus Christ's Revelation. And so the Creed goes on, in its second paragraph, to give what is the supreme reason for believing its first, *viz.* Jesus

¹ This is what E. Caird describes as " the basis of the thought of Jesus " ; *viz.* " the consciousness that good is omnipotent." " Evolution of Religion." Vol. II. Lect. V.

Christ Himself. The Incarnation of Jesus Christ both illuminated man's desire and satisfied it. It taught men that they were right in their yearning belief that Love was the law of the universe, and it taught them how immeasurably richer and more beautiful was that Love than anything which their dim vision had ever been able even to imagine.

PART 2.

And (I believe) in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

This paragraph contains two elements; I. the historical record; II. the interpretation of it. It states that a certain historic Person, called Jesus, Who lived a life in the world at a special point of its history, was the Christ, God's only Son, our Lord. And our exposition of the paragraph can be most clearly made, if the two elements are considered successively.

I. The historic life is outlined by the enumeration of its outstanding events, the Conception and Birth, the Death, the Resurrection, the Ascension. The whole idea is historical, and the whole reference is to historical evidence. We are given the outline of an actual life actually lived on earth, and requested to accept the record, as being that of men who knew the facts, and had no interest in falsifying them, who had gathered their own impression of the character of that life, and had no interest save that of presenting it truthfully. And the record, so taken, makes two assertions as to this life; (1) that it was human, (2) that it was uniquely human.

(1) Jesus' humanity was real, not fictitious. He actually suffered, He was actually dead and buried, He actually descended into Hell, or Hades. He underwent a genuine human lot in life and in death. In life He

was subject to human infirmities; all this side of His experience is included in the statement that He "suffered." In death He experienced the lot of all humanity; He was dead and buried, and in Hades He shared in the after-life which awaits all men on the further side of death. The evidence for His sufferings and death is the whole Gospel record, which speaks of an entirely human life on earth, and of an entirely human cessation of it. The evidence for the descent into Hades is naturally less voluminous. But such evidence as we have shows conclusively that it was the universal belief of the primitive Church. The references to it in the New Testament seem to take it for granted. It is declared by St. Peter on the day of Pentecost. "Neither was He (the Christ) left in Hades" (Acts ii. 31). It is implied by St. Paul in Romans x. 7. "Who shall descend into the abyss, that is, to bring Christ up from the dead?" and possibly also in Ephesians iv. 9. "Now this, He ascended, what is it but that He also descended into the lower parts of the earth?" A purpose for the descent is suggested in 1 St. Peter iii. 18, 19. "Christ was put to death in the flesh but quickened in the spirit, in which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison," and repeated in iv. 6, "the gospel was preached even to the dead." These references are ultimately derived from the words of Our Lord on the Cross to the penitent thief, "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise" (St. Luke xxiii. 43). It was, therefore, part of the earliest Christian belief that Christ, after death, went (to use their language) to the place where the departed spirits "wait for the final Resurrection"; or, since such language is misleading, we will say that, as at birth He had entered into the state of life of those who undergo the earthly probation, so at death He entered into the state of life of those who, not yet perfected, are undergoing continued education until they are fit for the unveiled vision of God.

The testimony of early Christian writers is similarly unanimous. Justin Martyr is so assured of the fact, that he charges the Jews with mutilating a prophecy of Jeremiah which foretold it. Irenæus of Lyons tells how

Christ descended into the world of the departed. Clement of Alexandria declares it as the assured teaching of Scripture, that our Lord preached the gospel to the departed. Origen, also from Egypt, asserts it as a belief of the Church that the soul of our Lord, stripped of its body, held converse with the souls of those who had passed away. Similar statements are made by Tertullian in Northern Africa, and by Cyril of Jerusalem; and the chain of teaching might be prolonged to prove, what is beyond dispute, that this belief was as universal in the Christian Church as it was primitive.

And, when we come to consider it, we see that the belief is involved in the reality of our Lord's death. It was fitting that He, Whose life and death on earth were wholly human, should share to the full the human lot after death, as before it. The manifestation of the Incarnate Life, if it was to be complete, must be carried into all the stages of existence, through which man has to pass to his perfection; not only into the earthly condition, but also into the further condition (the condition of Hades), wherein the departed continue the spiritual progress which they began here. And the hopefulness of the belief is obvious. It is the last assurance of the reality of Jesus' humanity. He bore our nature in life both here and there; and by so doing He redeemed the After-life from that gloom which had shrouded it in the previous ages of religion. Man had often guessed that he was immortal; but he had never been quite sure that he liked the prospect. The Jewish Sheol, the Græco-Roman Hades, the Oriental Abodes of the Dead, had been pictured far more often as the condition of an undesirable, though everlasting, existence than in any other way, as either frankly hideous, or else so ghostlike as to be more repulsive than attractive. But Christ, by His descent, "quickened in the spirit," into Hades, revealed the After-life as a condition, not only of continued existence, but also of an existence richer, fuller, more active and more mature; and so He "sanctified the grave to be a bed of hope to His people."

(2) Jesus' humanity, while real, was yet unique. The life of this Jesus, Who had in all other things been made

like unto His brethren, nevertheless exhibited features unique in human experience. (a) He was conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, *i.e.* His conception was the work, not of any carnal action, but of the direct operation of the Holy Ghost. The fact is to be considered, firstly, apart from any doctrinal bearing that it may later be seen to have. There was no *a priori* reason why the Christians should have been ready to believe it. The idea of a Virgin-Birth formed no part whatever of the current Jewish expectation of the Messiah. The great passage in Isaiah vii. 14 speaks only of a maiden or marriageable woman, not distinctively of a Virgin. And the whole flavour of the two narratives in the Gospels is so intensely Hebraic, that none but Jewish parallels can reasonably be suggested to account for the story. If these fail, no others can be invoked to cast suspicion on its authenticity. Nor did their belief in the Virgin-Birth make the Christians' task any easier, but rather the reverse. It soon provoked the foulest Jewish calumnies on the Blessed Virgin. It lent itself to the suggestion of an unreality in Jesus' humanity. And yet the Christians did not renounce the belief. Nor was their perseverance in holding it due to the fact that they attached any great evidential value to the Virgin-Birth. So far as we can see, it played no part in the mission preaching of early Christianity.

Nothing is at first heard of the Virgin-Birth as a necessity for the Incarnation, to cut off the entail of original sin. These doctrinal interpretations come later. The primitive Church never ventured to say that the Incarnation could not have taken place in any other way; they merely said that it took place in that way. They accepted the fact of the Virgin-Birth on historical evidence, and recorded and taught it as a fact which they had good reason for believing to be true. The belief in it was not even a peculiarity of orthodox doctrine. With the exception of a few Ebionites, who were as much Jews as they were Christians, and of the heretic Cerinthus, who regarded our Lord's Baptism, and not His conception, as the moment when the

Divine and human natures were united, all the heretics held the same belief as the orthodox. The statement of it appears in the earliest Church writers, and in the earliest form of that Creed from which the Apostles' Creed is derived. The fact was firmly and generally accepted as a fact. The tradition of it is not, and, by the very nature of the fact recorded, could not be, so universal as *e.g.* the tradition of the Resurrection. It was necessarily a fact which could only gradually become known, and could be based on no evidence save that of the Blessed Virgin herself and of St. Joseph; nor was it a fact that would be likely to be published broadcast at first. But, even so, it is recorded in two different traditions. The record in St. Luke is plainly archaic, and was probably written before the fall of Jerusalem, though possibly it was not at once incorporated into the Gospel. The record in St. Matthew is independent of St. Luke, and must therefore have been written down before St. Luke's Gospel was published, or at any rate before it had attained any wide circulation. The discrepancies in the two accounts, such as they are,—and there are no real inconsistencies—show their independence of one another. In the main fact of the actual Birth from a Virgin, the two agree entirely. We have, then, two sources of authority for it. And, besides the Gospel records, we have the evidence of universal Church acceptance.

The Virgin-Birth at once took its place as part of the general Christian tradition of the facts of Jesus' life. And we accept it primarily on no other grounds. We can assert that there was nothing *a priori* to suggest it. We can also state that none but *a priori* objections can assail it. It is certainly miraculous, in the sense that we cannot yet explain the law of its occurrence. But, if we believe that the Incarnation took place, it is not one whit more difficult to believe in the Virgin-Birth. The early Christians believed, and we believe, in the Incarnation, on the grounds of the Personality of Jesus Christ, on the witness of His Life and Death and Resurrection and His vital Presence. The early Christians believed, and we believe, in the Virgin-Birth as a part

of the tradition which has recorded for us the mode as well as the fact of the Incarnation.

But, when once we have accepted it as a fact, we can then, but not till then, go on, as the early Christians soon went on, to point out its entire congruity with the whole Personality of Christ. It emphasizes the new departure of the Incarnation; we feel it suits the idea of a sinless nature. To Justin Martyr the value of the belief was that, as born of a Virgin, Jesus Christ must be without sin. "If we remember that the source of sin is not the flesh but the will and restate the case accordingly, there may be perfect truth in the contention that, for all that we know, a sinless being could not owe his generation to the will of man. And this accords with the gospel history, which presents us with an event that is wholly due to the operation of the Divine Will; since the only human will concerned, that of Mary, is by her acceptance 'Be it unto me according to thy word' identified for the time being with the Divine; and the sole agency remains with 'the Lord and giver of life.'"¹ Finally, we may add, with Dr. Headlam, that, as Christ's Revelation of His Father has inspired the Christian ideal of fatherhood, so the Virgin-Birth has inspired the Christian ideal of motherhood. "I am not sure that the beautiful figure of the Virgin Mother, appealing to and arousing some of the highest human sentiments, has not been one of the strongest influences in creating religious devotion and elevating the purity of human life."²

(b) This same Jesus rose again the third day from the dead. The belief in this fact was absolutely universal in the whole Church from the morrow of Easter Day. Immediately after the Ascension the choice of a successor to Judas, in the number of the Twelve was declared to be the choice of a witness to the Resurrection. Every speech in the Acts attests the fact. Within 30 years of its occurrence St. Paul appeals to living witnesses of it, and treats it as an accepted truth. In a very short while the weekly commemoration of the Resurrection

¹ Illingworth. *Gospel Miracles*. Cap. IV.

² Headlam. *Miracles of the New Testament*. Lect. VII.

had become the central gathering-time of the Christian Church, and was supplanting the Sabbath in the estimation even of Jewish Christians. All the Gospels agree in recording the occurrence of the Resurrection; and their agreement is the more remarkable, because of the many discrepancies between them as to the details of the events which accompanied it. The existence of these discrepancies is easily intelligible. The Gospels are no newspaper reports. They are the record of personal memories, written down after some lapse of time; and as such they may easily, and they do, present statements that differ in details from one another. But this only brings into stronger relief the fact that they are really independent, and yet all agree in the one dominant circumstance, that on the third day the Tomb was empty, and Jesus was seen alive.

This dating of the event, which was undoubtedly part of the primitive belief, has no meaning at all except in relation to something which happened at the Tomb. The two points, *viz.* the Appearances and the Empty Tomb, always go together. We cannot, by any canon of critical logic, accept the Resurrection of Christ as a fact, and throw over a main element of the evidence on which it rests. The testimony for both points is the same. Indeed, whilst there are discrepancies in the evidence for the Appearances, there is none in the evidence for the Empty Tomb. So intimately were the two points connected, that those who wished to discredit the Resurrection thought that they could best do so by discrediting the story of the Empty Tomb; and the allegation that the disciples had stolen away the body was a very early piece of Jewish controversialism. It was not the Appearances alone which convinced the Christians that Jesus was alive, but those Appearances combined with the fact of the Empty Tomb. Once again, the fact was accepted by them purely on grounds of evidence. There is no hint of the supposition that a Resurrection could have taken place in no other way; but there is overwhelming proof that it did actually take place in that way, that they accepted the fact, simply because in their judgement it happened so.

Nor can we say that the event was imagined, because they antecedently expected it. On the contrary they were not predisposed to believe in it. Most of them belonged to the upper working-class, *i.e.* the class which is always the least ready to believe the unusual. And the event was a complete surprise to them, of which they were at first incredulous. Notice the statement in the first Gospel (Matthew xxviii. 17) that at first "some doubted" the fact. True, Christ had foretold it to them, but it is most certain that, as they themselves record, they had failed to understand His meaning. Good Friday evening saw them crushed, dispirited, and apparently disillusionized (*cf.* Luke xxiv. 21. "We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel"). The question, what happened on Easter Day, if the Resurrection did not actually occur, to make such men believe that it had occurred, and to produce in them such an entire revulsion of feeling as lies between the two dates, is really unanswerable.

Many theories have been put forward as alternatives to, or modifications of, the Gospel account. Some of these have aimed at impugning the whole story of the Resurrection, while others, though claiming to accept Our Lord's triumph over death and His Appearances to His disciples as spiritual realities, have sought to eliminate from the story the apparently material wonder which it includes, *viz.* the re-suscitation of His physical body. Of all such theories it must be said that they fail entirely to show themselves in the least degree convincing or even plausible, in their attempts to explain or to explain away the Gospel narrative. No imaginable theory can be put forward which, on historical and critical grounds, is not far more difficult to accept than the statement that the event actually happened as it is related. The crude assertion that the Apostles, and the Christians in general, and the Gospels, are all together in a conspiracy of falsehood, carries its own refutation on the face of it. It is frankly impossible to believe the New Testament to be the product of deliberate dishonesty. Nor was the belief in Christ's Resurrection a "paying proposition." It involved

social ostracism, and, as the Acts and St. Paul's Epistles show, imprisonment and suffering to those in Jerusalem who accepted it ; and yet they continued to believe and proclaim their belief. Any intermediate explanation between that of truth and that of conscious falsehood, is really barred out, all the more eloquently because the effect is produced with such an entire absence of consciousness. The testimony of the Evangelists makes it clear that the belief rested on no merely subjective hallucinations. Such theories as that the Apostles and the whole Church were themselves deluded—that Christ was not really dead at all—that the Romans took the body away—that the women went to the wrong tomb—although perhaps less crude, are equally devoid of any basis of evidence to give them even the appearance of plausibility.

On mere grounds of historical investigation, the evidence for Our Lord's Resurrection on the third day and for the emptiness of the Tomb is really unimpeachable. But, when we go on to try to estimate the spiritual significance of the Resurrection, there is no question that the Empty Tomb constitutes a real difficulty. True, it obviously marks more emphatically the triumph over death and the survival of Christ's complete Personality ; and, in this point of view, it might be treated as an accommodation to the disciples' ideas, in order to give them such an assurance of this survival as they could grasp. And yet we feel reluctant to understand it as no more than this. In the case of the Ascension, there is no difficulty in regarding the levitation of Our Lord's body as merely such an accommodation (*vid. infr.*) ; the material wonder is not so fundamental as to affect our understanding of the spiritual reality. But in this case there is a decided difference. At first sight, the disappearance of that which the Tomb had contained seems to imply that the connection between the earthly body of Our Lord's life among men and the glorified body in which He appeared to the eye of the believing after His Resurrection, because it is a direct connection, is wholly different in kind from that which, so far as we can tell, exists in the case of other

men¹; and, if this is so, it is a genuine obstacle to that application of the conditions of Christ's Resurrection to those of our own risen existence, which Christian thought has always insisted on making, and in which it has found one of the great practical lessons of the Easter event.

In the face of this, many have had recourse to desperate shifts in order to impugn the historical evidence for the Empty Tomb. But such a procedure is really presumptuous. It is a playing fast and loose with facts in order to make them accord with our knowledge or our mental presuppositions; to do this implies that we believe our knowledge to be complete, or our presuppositions infallible. After all, the power of spirit over matter, in the case of a sinless nature, is something of which *a priori* we can have little conception. Where the physical is so entirely and perfectly the organ of the spiritual as it was in the Son of Man, it is at least not inconceivable that it can be sublimated into an organ fit for the conditions of wholly spiritual life, without that interposition of the "bondage of corruption," through which alone our life is enabled to be "clothed upon" with a vesture that shall be more truly a vehicle of the spirit. It may eventually turn out that the process of Our Lord's Resurrection, as described in the Gospels, is but an instance of the same law—though its statement, in our present state of knowledge, eludes us—as that which operates in the case of our own existence after death; that in His case, owing to the sinlessness of His humanity, the spiritualizing of the physical took place immediately; whereas in the case of our tainted nature it can only do so mediately, through the destruction of the material particles of which our bodies are composed. If so, the resuscitation of Our Lord's body would be the revelation of the utmost possibilities of the physical to be the organ of the spiritual, of those possibilities to the realization of which human sin is the real impediment; and hence, the Christian instinct, for which the Empty Tomb has always

¹ See the discussion later on the clause "the Resurrection of the Body."

possessed a supreme value as the basis for belief in the Resurrection of the body, would turn out to have been entirely sound.

One thing is certain, that we lower our whole capacity of appreciating the real significance of Our Lord's Resurrection, when we treat it as a prodigy on the material plane, and not rather as the crowning exemplification of a spiritual principle that applies to all human life. If it were merely a material wonder, the question why Our Lord appeared after His Resurrection only to believers, and not "to all the people," as He had appeared before His Crucifixion, would admit of none but an artificial answer. The true explanation must be, that His existence after His Resurrection was wholly spiritual, and that His Appearances were therefore not a prodigy, but an illustration, in a highest and most pronounced instance, of a law of spiritual life, *viz.* the law that

"Spirit with spirit can meet,"

the law of that communion, which is a reality of spiritual fellowship even here under physical conditions, and is only to be perfected hereafter when those conditions are transcended.

This principle, of which the Resurrection is the palmary demonstration, may be stated as the "indestructibleness of all life that remains in communion with God."¹ The spiritual life is something that death cannot touch or interfere with, because it is in God. Hence we can infer the true relation of the Resurrection to the Incarnation. It is not a proof of it; to treat it as such is to be guilty of a dry and dead formalism. We do not believe that Jesus is God Incarnate, because He rose from the dead. We accept the fact of the Incarnation, as has been said, on the impression of Christ's Personality, as recorded in the New Testament, preserved in the Church, attested in history, and made our own in personal experience. But into this impression we can see that the Resurrection entirely fits; it is alone congruous with such a life. Such as Jesus was—One in Whom Divine and human

¹ The phrase is quoted in E. Caird. *Op. cit.* Vol. II. Lect. IX. ad fin.

were wholly one—could not be holden of death ; a life so perfectly in communion with God must necessarily be superior to the power of physical processes. Thus the Resurrection is the “natural” consequence of the quality of Christ’s Divine-human life. It is, we may say, a verification of the Incarnation, in this sense, that any other event would have been inconsistent with the true nature of a life, in which the union of human with Divine is consummated ; it would be a spiritual discrepancy, a hiatus in the whole of the impression which the Life of Jesus Christ makes.

The Resurrection of Christ is, therefore, absolutely central to Christianity, because it is the supreme illustration of the great truth for which Christianity stands, *viz.* that God is revealed in man, that therefore man’s true life is in God, and that this is eternal life, both here and hereafter ; the truth, in other words, of the really eternal quality of the spiritual life of man. It was one and the same power which endowed Christ with His authority over both the physical and the spiritual realms, which enabled Him both to heal disease and to forgive sin. It was one and the same power which enabled Him, though in all points like unto His brethren, to be yet without sin, and which raised Him from the dead. His Resurrection is the last demonstration of the same force as is shown in His Incarnate Life, the force of God in man, of the perfect union of Divine and human, the force of God’s ability to raise human nature into eternal life. This same power is at work in us here ; and its present operation is the guarantee of our hope for the hereafter. “God is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for all live unto Him” ; therefore we can go on to believe that “in Christ all shall be made alive” hereafter, because in Him all are made alive here and now. In fact, to be in Christ is to be alive, for it is to live unto God ; and this alone is real life. The power which raises us in this world from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness, which quickens and vitalizes the spiritual consciousness of men, the Divine principle manifested in our life on earth, this is the pledge of our future destiny ; because it is the same power that works

both in the present and in the future, since it is God's. Here and now, we who have been baptized into Christ's Death can "reckon ourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ Our Lord." And therefore also, "He who raised Christ from the dead, shall quicken our mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in us." In this life we can know the power of Christ's Resurrection and be partakers of eternal life in Him; because such life is in God, therefore it is indestructible; hereafter it will persist and develop; the physical process of death cannot interrupt the spiritual life which begins here. The Resurrection of Christ is the supreme example of God's ability to vitalize human personality. Of this ability our own present life gives us the foretaste; and therein we receive the assurance of the destiny of this life of ours in the everlasting future.

(c) This same Jesus ascended into Heaven. Here the historical fact is equally incontrovertible. No article of the Christian Faith was more certainly a part of the earliest tradition. The Biblical evidence consists, not only in the accounts at the end of St. Luke and in the beginning of the Acts, in the interpolated ending of St. Mark's Gospel, which comes at latest from the early sub-apostolic age, in such phrases as that in Ephesians iv. 8, 10, "He that descended is the same also that ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things," and the fragment of an early Christian hymn in 1 Timothy iii. 16, "He who was manifested in the flesh . . . received up into glory"; but the whole Christian belief in Christ's future Return, which was universal in the early Church, depended upon the belief that He had "ascended into Heaven." The Resurrection appearances had obviously ceased. The Christian records agree that Christ vanished out of the disciples' sight, and that He had been exalted at God's right hand. The metaphor is of local transmigration; we may well ask by what other means Christ could have made His departure intelligible to His followers, or how His followers could have described their experience except under the conceptions of their day. But the underlying truth

is perhaps most simply stated by saying that Our Lord never left Heaven at all. He that "came down from Heaven" was "the Son of man, *which is in Heaven*" (John iii. 13). The spiritual state, which is Heaven, is one which He did not relinquish—how could He do so?—but one which in His Incarnation He made manifest under earthly conditions. His Ascension was the point at which the visible and local appearances, connected with that manifestation, came to an end. It signified (1) the crowning of His finished work, the open consummation of the link between earth and Heaven, between human and Divine; (2) the transference of His Revelation beyond local and temporal limits. His Presence was no longer to be confined to Palestine and His Apostles. By His Ascension He is enabled to be present with every one of His disciples, and to give them the gifts which were obtained by His Sacrifice. "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send Him unto you." And so St. Paul declares that "He ascended up that He might fill all things." His Incarnate Life had been the story only of "all that Jesus *began* both to do and to teach" (Acts i. 1); and this leads us on to His present work in the Church, and to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

The apparent discrepancy in the records as to the locality and date of the Ascension, is not of more than minor importance. Our Lord's appearances and disappearances during the great 40 days were not connected with any single place. He came and went, developing His own message on Easter Day, "I ascend," and preparing His disciples for His passing into a state of existence where contact with Him may be more close and intimate than ever (this is the force of "Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended"), but must be wholly spiritual. Whatever the discrepancies in the recollection and record of this period, the undeniable fact is that He eventually ceased to appear in visible form, and that the last of these appearances was accompanied with circumstances and with words of the Lord Himself, which gave the disciples a conviction that it was the last, and that, because He was Son of God and Son of

Man, He had exalted our nature and enthroned it in the heart of God.

II. So then, this same Jesus, Who lived a perfect, and therefore a unique, human life, (1) had a supernatural¹ beginning to this life; (2) He had a supernatural ending to His dead condition; and (3) a supernatural cessation of the manifestations of His Risen Personality. His Conception, His Resurrection, and His Ascension were "miraculous." But it was, through all, the same Jesus; nothing was more certain than that. And the interpretation, which the Christians accepted, and accept, of this strange blending of natural and supernatural, or rather of normal and unique, in one historic life, is that this Jesus is the Christ, God's Only Son, Our Lord. The attested events were credible on this interpretation; and the interpretation alone accorded with the general impression of Christ's Personality. The whole manifestation thus became coherent and intelligible. As the Christ, Jesus is the Anointed of God, the One Who fulfils the Messianic expectations of the Jews, and the less articulate but no less genuine expectations or desires of the Gentiles, the Hope of Israel and of the world, long-expected and desired, the goal of past history, and the foundation of future development. He is God's Only Son, begotten in a sense special and inapplicable to the sons of men, begotten not by creation or adoption, not by any physical process, but by a spiritual derivation of essence, Son of God as no one else is, Eternal Son of Eternal Father, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, being of one substance or essence with the Father. He is Our Lord. He has by right the dominion and authority over mankind; He is the head of all Creation; of Him and through Him and in Him all things consist.

His life on earth, then, was not the materialization of a

¹ "Supernatural," *only* in the sense that we do not understand the law of nature with which it is in accordance. Of course, in the deepest reality, it must have been wholly "natural," wholly in accordance with God's laws; but the statement of the law in each of these three cases is at present beyond the scope of our knowledge.

phantom Deity, nor a humanity attaining deification, but an Incarnation, a real union of Divine and human, God in Man. In Him was seen God manifested in human form, the Word of God made flesh. The whole life was unintelligible upon any other explanation. He was fully Man, as all could see Him, true Man; He was indeed perfect Man; there is no fragmentariness about Him. In Him all mankind, and all woman-kind, is summed up. He is the representative Man, the Son of Man, and in Him each can find his best Self.¹ But He was fully God too, for in that way alone could men explain their experience of Him and their impression of His Personality and Life. In Him God became real to man, because in Him Man was perfect Man.

Hence His present activities in His ascended existence could be inferred. He, this same Jesus, is still such as He was seen to be, God and Man for ever, not dehumanized, but in the personal identity which He assumed at His conception, God and Man One Christ. In this identity He sits on the right hand of God. The metaphor, again, is local, but its implication is (1) of essential authority and sovereignty, (2) of effectual helpfulness. Christ, our Brother-Man, is the High-Priest of Man before God, active for us in intercession to which His accomplished work gives efficacy, the medium of all God's grace. And in this identity He will come to judge. Here, once more, under a local metaphor an essential function is described. Christ's Return in triumph is to be the final issue of all His work for man and in man. Before His Incarnation He had always been "coming" to mankind, sometimes in startling cataclysms of history or in epoch-making revelations to inspired individuals, more generally in the quieter operation of His Spirit lighting every man. And the first Christmas was but the climax, to which all His previous activity in the life of humanity had led up. So, too, in the sequel He is still coming, sometimes at those epochs in the history of societies or of individuals, when the entrance of new thoughts and principles and estimates effects a spiritual revolution

¹ Cf. Goldwin Smith's lectures on the "Study of History," pp. 135-142, quoted in Westcott, "The Historic Faith," App. VII.

in their life, but more generally in the quiet processes of human improvement. And even now He comes to judge as well as to save, to save by judging, to separate, to refine by consuming what is ready to perish; but the work is not seen or recognised as His work save by those who believe in Him. And, as now He is gradually unveiling an accomplished fact, *viz.* that He is All-Sovereign and Supreme over all Kingdoms everywhere, so His final "Coming" will be the consummation of this process, the final Revelation, visible and distinguishable by all, of things as they really are, when His standards will at last prevail entirely, and all in man or in men that is contrary to them will be destroyed, when the final consequences of all actions will be made plain, and the final separation between good and evil will be pronounced, when God will at last be all in all, and all will be put under His feet, and the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ will be revealed as the final word of human attainment.¹

The belief that Jesus Christ is the Son of God Incarnate lies at the core of the Christian gospel. Indeed, apart from this belief, Christianity is no gospel at all; it supplies us with an example for imitation; but it has no good news to declare, no new power to impart, no new gifts to bestow. It but tells the biography of one more Martyr, the story of a man of uniquely complete beauty and graciousness and wisdom of character, a man who had "done nothing amiss," who had consistently gone about "doing good," and of the fate which befell him at men's hands. As such, it widens the distance, already great enough, between man's highest and man's lowest achievements. If we see in Jesus how high human nature can rise, we see in Jesus' murder how low it can fall. The contrast of human types on Calvary is shocking in its violence, and suggests questions to which, if the Christian Faith be rejected, no encouraging answer can be made. *Ecce Homo*; "behold the Man." Yes, but look round Him too, and *Ecce homines*, "behold the men." And there is nothing to assure us which of

¹ Cf. Westcott. "The Historic Faith." Lect. VII.

the types is more true to man's real nature. We know already our own liability to sin, our own distance from God, we feel the downward drag at work in our own nature, we feel much more like "the men" than like "the Man." And we know that what we need most is not a new example outside us, but a new power within us to master the downward tendency, to lift us nearer to God, to make us feel more akin to Jesus and less akin to His murderers.

Yet, is the aspiration anything but a dupe? Is Atonement with God attainable? Does God on His side want it? Is it any but the most forlorn of hopes, that man can win to God? Everything seems to justify despair, to mock ambition for holiness. Mankind looks so little; is there any proof that there is any greatness in humanity? So we are left, questioning; and no confident answer can be given, until we learn to believe that Jesus Christ is indeed that which the Christian Faith declares Him to be, the Son of God and the Son of Man. And then the answers come, and satisfy. For if Christ is indeed such, then it is true that God is the Father of Love; He is Love to the uttermost point of Self-sacrifice for man, in order to win man to Himself; and that is good news, for Love is Power, the only Power, and the gospel of Love is the power of God unto salvation. The way of Atonement, then, is open on God's side. And on man's side, too, it is open; for in Christ we see the true, the only true, type of humanity. Man is by nature capable of union with God. It is not human to sin; sin is a disease of humanity. It is human to conquer sin; holiness is man's real nature. And so we can hope, no longer against hope, but with confidence. Mankind is really great, for God and man are truly one. Conscious of sin as we are and must be, we must also be conscious of the holiness of human nature. We must sorrow that we are so low. But we must not sorrow as those that have no hope. We can aspire to renounce sin; and Christian penitence can dare to be hopeful.

This is the Christian explanation of Jesus' life. Its ground at the outset was the personal experience of the first Christians, that God became real to them in the

historic Person of Jesus ; its verification now lies in the fact that this same experience is perpetuated in the Christian believers of all ages. Jesus Christ is God and Man, God Incarnate. Hence was inferred His relation to God. He Himself had spoken of His heavenly Father, and He must know. So the Christian Church arrived at the first distinction in the Godhead, that of Father and Son ; an eternal distinction because it is in God. When the first Christians said that Jesus was Lord and Christ, the formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity had already begun. There were two Persons in the Godhead. The Church's personal impression and experience of Jesus' Person made them see Him as God ; all agreed in that ; and such an One must know of His own relation to the Deity. He called Him Father, and spoke of Him as distinct from, and yet one with, Himself. So they declared that they believed in God the Father and God the Son. They knew that God was Father through seeing His Son, Who said " he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." They knew that Christ was Son because He claimed in all to be from the Father. " I and My Father are one," and " the words that I say unto you I speak not from Myself, but the Father abiding in Me doeth His works." And what He was, He was not for Himself alone, but for all mankind ; for He is Son of Man. In Him every man could be one with God. " At that day ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you." The establishment and consolidation of this union was the work of that " other Comforter," Who was to come to abide for ever with those who loved the Lord and kept His commandments.

PART 3.

I believe in the Holy Ghost ; the holy Catholick Church ; the Communion of Saints ; the Forgiveness of sins ; the Resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

On the day of Pentecost the disciples of Jesus began to realize a new consciousness of their relation to Him. He was alive, they knew ; but He was ascended, and gone, they had thought. And yet they now began to feel that

He was still with and in them, not with the mere inspiration of a past memory, but with the life of a present indwelling. The signs of His Presence were unmistakable; the speaking with tongues, the cure of the lame man, these were the more striking of such signs, and challenged general attention. But the Presence showed itself also in less startling, but no less genuine, ways. They felt themselves to be different men. We can see that they were different men. The contrast between the temper and attitude of the Twelve in the Gospels and in the Acts is one of the miracles of Christian history. They were conscious of a new courage and power and life, a new desire for holiness, a new capacity to bring forth fruit unto God in their lives, a spirit no longer "of fearfulness, but of power and love and discipline." And this experience was somehow connected with Jesus Christ; of that they were sure; it came to them through Him. But Jesus was gone from sight; therefore, they inferred, it must be His Spirit at work, a spiritual influence from Him, prompting, suggesting, guiding, comforting, instructing. It was the Holy Spirit, of Whom He had spoken.

This belief arose, therefore, out of a personal experience which called for explanation. The Christians started with no theory about the Spirit of God. The idea of God dwelling among His people was, of course, not wholly unfamiliar to the Jews. The conception of the Shekinah, the glory of God in and over the Tabernacle, was an important element in Jewish devotion; and even the idea of God's Presence with the individual soul was not quite foreign to Jewish thought. The 139th Psalm, for instance, is in the language of the purest mysticism. "If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in Sheol, behold, thou art there." But the early Christians never seem to have traced any analogy between such ideas and their belief in the continued Presence of Jesus with them. This was something which they had never known, except in so far as they had felt it in the Presence of their Master. For them the belief in the Holy Spirit was a matter of vital personal experience. They felt that Jesus

was with them all the days ; and their doctrine of the Holy Spirit was the way in which they were led to explain this consciousness.

The Holy Spirit, then, was felt to be something like " a power, not ourselves, making for righteousness." And the Christians connected this power with Jesus Christ. It came from Him. It was " the Spirit of Jesus " (Acts xvi. 7). But they never regarded it as a mere personified abstraction, an energy or quality of God's action. The experience was too direct and personal for such an explanation. The Spirit was a Person, therefore, Who, distinct from man's own Will, prompted in man personal dispositions and operations towards a life after the model of Jesus Christ. He came from Jesus Christ (" This Jesus . . . hath poured forth this which ye see and hear." Acts ii. 33), and so ultimately from God. They did not at first theorize about the fact ; they simply recorded it as a fact. And at first, in discussing it, they were apt to confuse the function of Christ with that of the Holy Spirit. Such a confusion is not uncommonly seen in early Church writers. Nor is it strange that it should exist ; even after centuries of theological discussion and formulation, our own thoughts find it hard enough to appraise the distinctions existing in such a Unity as that of the Triune Godhead. But as the reflections of the early Church clarified, and they had more time to ponder upon their experience, the distinction became more clearly realized. Jesus' own remembered language was their guide. He had spoken of the Spirit, Whom He would send from the Father. This and similar language implied a personal distinction. And this, because it was a distinction in the Nature of God, must be as eternal as the distinction between Father and Son. The phrase, by which they eventually came to express it, was that of " procession." As in the case of the phrase " begotten " to explain the Son's relation to the Father, so this phrase was but a metaphor to express something that, because it concerned the Nature of God, must be beyond human categories of being. But the metaphor was meant to express the belief in a real distinction within the God-

head. As from all eternity the Eternal Father and the Eternal Son had existed, distinct from one another, and yet wholly one in a mutual love, so from all eternity the Eternal Spirit, proceeding from both, had been the bond which united them.

And, in relation to mankind, this personal distinction showed itself in difference of function. In all ages, before as after the Incarnation, the Son of God is the Life, the Spirit is the Life-giver. The One is the Word, the Other is the Interpreter of the Word. Both are Persons, for both can enter into personal relation with men. So, starting from the personal experience of Jesus' influence still active and His Presence still alive in them, they learnt to understand His teaching in the light of this experience, and arrived at the triple distinction in the Godhead. God was not only a Duality ; He was a Trinity in Unity, a Trinity of Father, Son, and Spirit, eternally distinct, yet eternally one. God was Three Persons, yet One God ; one wholly, in nature, in will, in work. In experience they had become conscious of distinctions in His operation ; and, by the light of Jesus' teaching, they realized these distinctions as corresponding to eternal distinctions in the Divine Nature. The Trinitarian formula was, therefore, no product of philosophic reasoning ; the disciples accepted it on the basis of a personal experience of Jesus, which they needed to explain, and of the obedient reception of His teaching as containing a true revelation of God, so far as man could grasp it. In short, they accepted the formula on the authority of Jesus, as the only satisfactory explanation of their undoubted experience.

Our belief in the Trinity still depends directly on our acceptance of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and on nothing else. There is but one fundamental Christian dogma, that of the Incarnation ; all else is derivative from it. And we believe in the Incarnation, as the early Christians did, on the grounds of our personal experience of Jesus, as we read of Him in the Gospels, as we become aware of His Presence in our lives, as we see the marks of His operation in the Church of past and present. But, once accepted, the Trinitarian doctrine still justi-

fies itself in experience, by the only two tests which can be applied ;

(1) It explains. True, the Nature of God remains a mystery. It would be so surprising as to be suspicious, if it were otherwise. But the doctrine of the Trinity alone gives an explanation at all adequate to our experience and satisfying to our instinct for worship. If it is true, we can in some measure understand the relation of Our Lord's Incarnate life to God. It is still our case that God becomes real to us in Him ; and the doctrine of the Incarnation supplies an explanation which fits this fact, as no other explanation can. Jesus was God's Eternal Son manifested in human flesh. Again, if the Trinitarian doctrine is true, we can also in some measure understand Jesus Christ's relation to us. Jesus is alive with us and in us all the days ; we know it by personal experience. And the doctrine of the Holy Spirit supplies an explanation, which makes us see how this could be possible.

(2) It attracts. We cannot do without the doctrine, or any part of it. It makes God lovable, for it shows how God is Love. (a) In Himself we see God from all eternity as a Triune Fellowship of Love ; not existing in a bare isolation, but in a rich life of personal relations. (b) It gives the sole reliable guarantee of God's Love towards us. God Himself has provided for us a Mediator, through Whom we can have access to Him, and provided Him at the cost of a personal Self-sacrifice, which seems so immense as to be almost incredible. It would be too good to be true, if it were not true, that God sent His Son to be made man and to die for us and our salvation. And God provides in the Holy Spirit a medium, by Whom the continued personal inspiration of this Son is guaranteed to each one of us, a Guide, a Teacher, and a Friend, through Whose operation within us we enjoy a personal fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ.

Here then lies the practical bearing of the doctrine of the Trinity. We look back into the ages before the Incarnation, and we see the Son as God's Agent in Creation, the Spirit as God's Interpreter in inspiration,

“Who spake by the prophets.” In the Incarnation we see, by the operation of the Spirit in the life of the Blessed Virgin, the Son made Man for the re-creation of man, and thenceforward the Spirit continuing and developing and interpreting the work of the Incarnate Word, by conveying to men the grace which accompanies the new birth, and inspires the new life, in Christ. The whole process of operation is one and indivisible. The Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father and the Son. But, as in the fulness of time the Son became Man, so in the fulness of time the Spirit embodies Himself in the Society in which Christ's life is focussed. Thus, by the work of the Spirit, the whole drama of our Redemption continually goes on. It is not an act done once in time, and thenceforth persisting only in its effects. It is an act that is continuous in time, and continuous in effective energy.

We accept, therefore, the doctrine of the Trinity, and declare our belief in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, not presuming to think that thereby we have explained God's Nature. But we accept it on the authority of Jesus Christ, of the Church, and of the Bible, as the only explanation which seems to fit the facts of the case. We start, as the first Christians started, from the facts of life. Life is obviously a battle-ground between good and evil. In this battle God is actively engaged; He is no *roi fainéant*. The supreme proof that this is so is the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, which is also God's supreme action in the contest. And this action is continued and applied by the Holy Spirit, working in human souls and in human society. As in Our Lord's Manhood the Spirit found at last an area for the unfettered exercise of His Power within human nature, and thus in Him humanity is now exalted into union with the Divine Nature, so it is the Spirit's function to convey Our Lord's humanity to mankind through the Catholic Church, and thereby to transform the human race into the likeness of Him, by Whom all things were made, and in Whom all mankind is being made anew after His pattern.

The remaining articles of the Creed, whether this be their original intention or not, do actually give typical instances of this work of the Holy Spirit, and can only be properly understood in this light.

I. *The Holy Catholic Church.* The Spirit, Who unites men to Christ, thereby unites them to one another. The life of Christian devotion is to manifest itself in an organic solidarity. Christianity has always been a personal, and always a social, religion. The Church was founded by Jesus Christ, and each member is but a stone added to the building. "Men talk sometimes as if a Church could be constituted simply by Christians coming together and uniting themselves into one body for the purpose. Men speak as if Christians came first and the Church after; as if the origin of the Church was in the wills of individual Christians who composed it. But, on the contrary, throughout the teaching of the Apostles, we see that it is the Church that comes first and the members of it afterwards. The Church takes its origin, not in the will of man, but in the will of the Lord Jesus Christ. He 'sent forth' His Apostles . . . to gather all the thousands whom they could reach within the fold; but they came first, and the members came afterwards. . . . Everywhere men were 'called in'; they did not come in, and make the Church by coming. They are called into that which already exists; . . . their membership depends on their admission, and not upon their constituting themselves into a body in the sight of the Lord."¹ Since the unity of love is the mark of those who are bearers of the Spirit of the God of Love, the fellowship of the Church is to provide the sphere for the learning and practice of this love. It is thus the consecration of human brotherhood. It asserts three main principles as essentials for man's highest and truest life;

(a) The principle of human association. Man is made for society, and only reaches his true self in society. A common cause, a common spirit, a common life, are necessities for the fulness of human existence. There-

¹ From a sermon of Archbp. Temple, in "Sermons preached at the Consecration of Truro Cathedral."

fore fellowship is a necessary characteristic of the Christian life. Christians are members of a Church, wherein the principle of a real collectivism is embodied, where mutual ministration is to be the rule, that "bearing of one another's burdens" which fulfils the law of Christ.

(b) The principle of Catholic association. All mankind is solid. There can be no perfect human fellowship, which is not inclusive of all men and all societies and all nations. Men find partial realizations of such fellowship in various forms of community, such as the family or the nation. But the society of the Church transcends, by including, all particular forms of association, and corrects the defects of their particularism by its universality. Its common cause, the cause of the Kingship of Christ, of which the Christian Creed is the formulated basis, is the universal, of which all other good causes are but fragments. Its common spirit, the spirit of God's service, of which the Christian discipline is the code, is the universal, of which every other form of public spirit is a partial expression. Its common life, the life of Christ in man, of which the Christian Sacraments are the ordained means of bestowal and sustenance, is the universal, in which all other human communion is transfigured and perfected. The Church is Catholic, because it alone possesses universal truth and grace for all mankind.

(c) The principle of Christian association. All other forms of human society prove inadequate to restrain men's selfish ambitions. In Christ alone can an association at once perfect and stable be realized; for in Christ alone human selfishness is swallowed up, and human life becomes God-centred. The Church is the society of those who are in Christ. Individual members of it may fail, the Church as a whole may at times be false to its trust, and be infected with the spirit of the world; but in purpose and ideal it remains the society for which the God of Love is the acknowledged Centre, holy, because He who founded it is holy, because it is the specially chosen sphere of the operation of the Holy Spirit, holy, because its life, its spirit, its standards,

its institutions, its work, all depend on God and look God-wards. "One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren" is the motto of the Church. This is the truth to which we set our seal, every time that we say "I believe in the holy Catholic Church."

The Church, then, is the society, in which men can learn to live the Christian life. It is "the Body of Christ," the focus of His life, the channel of His influence, as conveyed by the Holy Spirit. We do not, of course we cannot, limit the operation of the Holy Spirit within the Church's circumference. He works in divers ways, and ranges freely beyond His own ordained sphere. But the focus of His power, the central channel of His grace, lie where God has elected to place them. The root idea of holiness is "being set apart." The holy Church is the Society of those who have been "chosen out of the world," not by any act of their own, but by Baptism and their response to its claim.

This truth is implied in the Church's name of "the new Israel," which is one of St. Paul's favourite terms for it. In old days, God did not leave Himself without witness in any nation, and every race had its own portion of Divine light. But yet the old Israel, the nation of God's election, was that in whose history the central line of God's purpose of Redemption was drawn; and within it, the tribe of Levi, the family of Aaron, and the High Priest in one respect, the Prophets and Wise Men in another, were set apart as the special agents of His Will for certain purposes. So, in these times, though God still has His witnesses in every religion, and there is no form of belief but possesses its own share of the Divine Spirit, yet in the new Israel of the Church lies the central sphere, in which that Spirit works; and within it, men like Barnabas and Saul (Acts xiii. 2), and in every age those who specially minister His Word and Sacraments, are set apart as the instruments through which He acts with special direction. And this suggests a further thought. The old Israel was elect to its privileges, as the means through which God could work outwards to the nations; so in the Church the Holy Spirit is always working, through

it, outwards to those who are not as yet within its circle. Through it flows out the stream of Divine grace, by which the world is watered. The Church is a missionary Church, because the Holy Spirit in the Church is a missionary Spirit. Nor will the Church be complete, till all the redeemed are in the one flock of the One Shepherd.

Meanwhile, the Church is the visible nucleus for "the reconstitution of the social life of mankind on the basis of their essential unity with each other and with God."¹ Round it the Holy Spirit is forming the Kingdom of Heaven. It is visible, because it is intended to provide a definite training in brotherhood. There is One Body as well as One Spirit. It is of the essence of a real brotherhood of humanity, such as the Church is meant to be, that it should not be a self-chosen association of none but mutually congenial people. Such a fellowship always tends to become narrow, exclusive, and self-opinionated. The Church is intended to include all sorts of people, high and low, rich and poor, educated and ignorant, saint and sinner, as well as all nations and languages; and its members are to learn how to be brotherly with any of their fellow-members, however uncongenial they may be. They are to grow into like-mindedness, and yet to avoid monotony of type. The sharp edge of individuality is to be sharpened, and yet all individuality is to be taught to serve a common end. Those who do not see eye to eye are to strive after closer fellowship with one another, so that, by mutual assistance and instruction, each may be able to co-ordinate aspects of truth which he sees with other aspects of the same truth, that will be revealed to him through others, with whom he is to work.

Because the Church is visible, therefore it is also continuous; continuous in its life, and continuous in the structure within which its life is organized. It needs, as well as the inward spirit of unity, the outward framework by which that unity may receive embodiment. From the very first the Church recognized and

¹ A phrase of E. Caird's "Evolution of Religion." Vol. II. Lect.V.

treasured certain outward expressions and symbols and instruments of its oneness, *viz.* "the Apostles' teaching and fellowship, the breaking of bread, and the prayers." The Christians were expected to believe and to do certain things in common. The Church had its common rules and rites and officers, and within that structure its life grew and developed.

Again, because the Church is visible, therefore it is of necessity imperfect. It includes good and bad, tares and wheat, within its fellowship, just as every man includes good and bad within the microcosm of his own nature. And so its work is intensive as well as extensive. It has to present its truth outwardly to the world, and at the same time inwardly to bring it home more deeply to its present members. By the combination of both forms of activity, the lump is to be all leavened, and the whole of mankind is to be one lump.

We may conclude, therefore, that "One Holy Catholic Church" is the statement of an ideal towards which the actual Church has to grow, rather than of a reality now present. It exists in the mind and purpose of God, and not as yet before the eyes of men. And the actual Church, dear as it is to us for what it is, is dearest to us for what it is becoming. We believe the ideal to be future, but certain and not imaginary, and the present Church to be the ordained means to the realization of that ideal, because it is, as the Body of Christ, the Home of God's Holy Spirit, and because it is the Bride of Christ, for which He gave Himself, "that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing." It has not yet solved the terribly difficult problems of combining Liberty and Order, Stability and Development, Fidelity to Truth and Tolerance, Charity and Discipline. It has often lamentably failed to be the prophetic organ of God's Kingdom. It has still its spots and wrinkles and many such things. But the ideal, which the Church sets forth, is actually the main inspiration by which, in spite of innumerable mistakes and infidelities, its life is prevaillingly sustained. Even now there are times when, in spite of our divisions, social, ecclesiastical, personal, we are conscious of unity,

when, in spite of our sins, we feel the beauty of holiness and the love of God and His Presence, and, in spite of our weakness, we taste the assurance of victory. It is through the Church of the present that these moments come to us. How can we fail to love and believe in a Church that ministers such grace to us, even in its present condition of imperfection? These moments are to us the renewed pledge of the Holy Spirit's continued activity in the Church; and they are the earnest of the time when this Church shall be complete and foursquare as God purposes, the new Jerusalem, the City of God, in which "all know the Lord, from the least to the greatest," in which all will come, "unto the unity of the Faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

2. If the clause "the holy Catholic Church" states the ideal of the Christian body, the body of the baptized, which it is to realize in the world, the clause "*the Communion of Saints*" declares the actual present possession of its members within the Church. In Jesus Christ all His people are knit together; they are one with Him, and in Him with each other. They are sharers in the grace of the Holy Spirit, because, as baptized, they are in the sphere of His sanctifying influence. All Christians are meant to be, are called to be, saints. Saintliness is never confused by the Church with sinlessness. They have not yet apprehended, nor are yet made perfect, but they are pressing on toward the goal, "unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Some, of course, are more in earnest than others, and are realizing the Communion of Saints more fully. Some are not realizing it at all. But this Communion is obtainable by all, and those who are living in charity, those who are in any measure realizing their fellowship with the just, in the same measure realize this Communion as an actual present possession. This Communion is the work of the Holy Spirit, imparting to each the one life of Christ Jesus glorified, inspiring in each the enthusiasm for the one work of forwarding God's Kingdom, holding out to each the one hope of a redeemed world,

redeemed from all evil, as the goal of their aspirations and labours. This is the one real and abiding unity of mankind, which reverses the catastrophe of Babel. All those who realize it speak with one tongue, for all speak in the Spirit; and all are like-minded, for all have the mind of Christ.

In average experience, this Communion is only made actual in partial fragments. We are, probably of necessity, limited in the scope of our immediate interests. But in mutual intercession it is realized most fully; and, the wider our intercessions are taught to range, the bigger becomes our feeling of Communion with our fellow-Christians throughout the world, known and unknown, of all peoples and nations and kindred and tongues.

In short, this article declares the real solidarity of all faithful members of Christ, which is the spiritual analogue of the solidarity in nature of all mankind. They all form one great "Side"; "the congregation of all faithful people" is one great army, the army of "all the whole Church" enlisted under Christ's banner, and serving Him in their various ways. This "Side" is the Side of Christ. Its members are in communion with one another, because they are in communion with Christ. The Will of the one Leader inspires all and each.

In this army the dead have their place, as well as the living; or rather—for there are no dead—the living on earth, and the living who have departed from the earth, are in communion with each other. This fact is realized in two ways; (1) the living are heirs and descendants of the past, and responsible to it for the way in which they use the heritage handed down to them. The work of the past cannot bear its full fruit, except in so far as we of the present carry on and complete it. But it lives with us in its spiritual energy, to create as it were the environment in which we have to labour. The sense of Church continuity is as real as, and should be, at the least, no less inspiring than, that of domestic or national continuity. Indeed, it embraces and consecrates within itself all other forms of social inheritance, in which men can find a motive for high endeavour.

“ To belong to a great family, to a great society, to a great nation, is, if rightly viewed, a man’s noblest birthright. He whose name is a memorial of past honours, and whose earliest years are spent, as it were, in the light of illustrious deeds ; he who has learnt to feel that there is a history in which he has a part, and who has rejoiced in the triumphs of a people whose hopes and impulses he shares, must from time to time be raised above all that is selfish and even personal ; he must become conscious of the accumulated power with which he is endowed, and of the social destiny to which he is called. Let the name be that Name which is above every name ; let the history be written in every splendid achievement by which the Kingdom of God has been advanced ; let the triumphs be those by which faith through the ages subdues all things to herself ; let the fellowship be that of Saints and Confessors ; and then we shall understand, dimly it may be, but yet so that effort will be kindled with fresh enthusiasm, what our fathers meant when they handed down to us truths which they had proved in actual experience ; then we shall say with livelier imagination and fuller heart, each in the prospect of our little work and with the sense of our peculiar trials, acknowledging that that work is transfigured by a divine concentration, and that those trials are conquered by a spiritual sympathy : ‘ I believe in the Holy Catholic Church ; I believe in the Communion of Saints.’ ”¹

(2) More directly, those who have departed this life in Christ’s faith and fear are still alive, concerned in the same work, though now from a fresh position in the line. We run our Christian race with the eyes of antiquity upon us. All about and around us is a host of spiritual influences which compass us, and by their prayers, if by nothing else, they influence the fortunes of the contest. “ They, without us, cannot be made perfect.” All Christendom, living and departed, forms a solid fellowship. In our best moments we experience the conviction of this truth. [There are some to whom

¹ Westcott. “ The Historic Faith.” Cap. IX. ad fin.

these moments come frequently, others to whom they come but seldom. But to everyone who has felt it at all, the experience is a profound reality, and it produces the deep sense of a great living fellowship with all Christ's servants in this life and the next. This is the truth which we declare, when we profess our belief in the Communion of Saints.

3. *The Forgiveness of Sins* is the distinctive Christian message, on its practical side. It was so from the beginning of the Church. The offer of Forgiveness was that which pointed St. Peter's challenge on the day of Pentecost. And the challenge is repeatedly justified in the experience of those who seriously take it up. Nature never forgives a mistake. But the sense of Forgiveness is the most precious practical reality of Christian life. The Church of Christ exists to declare a fact, the fact of the Incarnation, to perpetuate its power, and to deduce from this fact, and enable men to realize, its practical application, in the doctrine of the Atonement effected between God and man by the Life and Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Its call is to all to realize this Atonement personally, by incorporation into Christ through Baptism. In such realization they will find themselves freed from the burden and dominion of sin, and enabled to walk before God in newness of life.

The fact of the Atonement may be expressed in some such way as follows, though no explanation can make the wonderful mystery of Forgiveness anything but a marvel of Divine condescension:—

(a) There is an affinity between God and man. Man is created in God's image. But the realization of this affinity is impeded by the power of sin. The Gospel emphatically does not say that sin does not matter; nor does it try to soothe any pangs that our consciences might feel, by the assurance, which no honest man will ever believe, that things can ever be the same as they would have been, if sin had not intervened. On the contrary, it insists that sin matters so tremendously that, in consequence of it, it is hopeless for man to expect, by any effort of his own, to earn God's forgiveness. He

may do all, but he can never do enough, nor go far enough, in the way of merit, to win pardon. He is one of a sinful race, a race that is solid in sinfulness, and the common guilt of the race is a guilt that he shares, and, by his own transgressions, increases. "Oh wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?" will always be the conclusion of all the estimates of himself, when a true man faces truly the problem of his deserts in the sight of God.

(b) But the gospel of the Atonement declares that God's pardon is already won. God has Himself done all, He has Himself come the whole way to man. Man is a forgiven being. Of this truth the Cross of Christ, in the light of His Resurrection, is the guarantee. Prior to any efforts of ours comes the one, full, perfect, and sufficient Sacrifice of Christ for the sins of the whole world. By it God is shown already reconciled to man. This does not mean that due punishment is to be cancelled or remitted. As Mr. Bernard Shaw says, "We must pay our debts." The moral law "Be done by as you did" holds us remorselessly in its grip. But the Cross teaches that the estrangement from God, which is the worst consequence of sin, is not necessarily final. Reunion, At-one-ment, with Him is possible for Christ's sake, if only man will comply with the conditions. And when that alienation from God is removed, and pardon accepted, the consequences, which still work their way, become no longer penal, but disciplinary. They are the same consequences, but the sinner no longer endures them in the same spirit. The real sting of punishment is gone from them, and he undergoes them, nay he may even welcome them, as the means whereby his penitence is deepened, and "the peaceable fruit of righteousness" is yielded in rich abundance within his character.

The conditions of this Reunion are (1) Repentance, sorrow for the estrangement which sin caused, and (2) Faith, *i.e.* acceptance of the way of improvement, which has been opened up in the fellowship of those who have been incorporated into Christ.

(c) The establishment of this "Way" is the essence

of the Atonement. It is the creation of a new Society, solid in Redemption, as the original tragedy, whatever it was, made mankind solid in estrangement. The Church's ministry is one of reconciliation; not for the purpose of teaching us how to win a reconciliation not yet achieved, but to declare a fellowship already won, to call and enable us to realize it, and, so realizing it, to be ourselves responsively reconciled to God. To realize that we are forgiven imparts a new lift to our souls, shedding a new light on our relation to God and to one another; it is the gift of new life. We feel that we start forgiven, brought near to God. We have access to Him; we can realize our affinity to Him. This realization is possible because we have been baptized; we enter into union with Christ in the way which He opened to us, the way of fellowship in Him. The Holy Spirit is the Agent in the beginning of this realization; and henceforward it is His work to deepen and make actual this relation, to inspire us to pursue the path of the forgiven, and to strengthen the new life that is in us. It is by His grace that we are to live the forgiven life, and to perfect our reconciliation with God.

Thus Baptism is, in fact, the great Absolution; "I acknowledge one Baptism for the Remission of sins." It effects for us a change of spiritual environment; it proclaims for the individual that he has entered into the new status acquired for humanity by Christ, and that the forgiven life is actually his to realize. If and when he sins, the virtue of Baptism remains, assuring him of the status which it has indelibly conferred on him, and that the gift of pardon is always ready for him. But, in practice, the forgiven life, which ideally would mean the life of perfect renunciation of sin, means the life of repeated and chronic repentance, and renewal by recourse to the Absolution, which the Holy Spirit conveys to us through the Church's ministrations. This Absolution is not a new forgiveness, following on a new repentance for new sin. It is the declaration, and the communication to us, of a forgiveness that is for ever at our disposal. The offer of Forgiveness is always

antecedent to our penitence. Not even the truest penitence of ours can earn a right to the offer. "Could my tears for ever flow, All for sin could not atone." Christ only could win the offer; and He has won it for ever, and for all. But penitence is the means by which we declare our acceptance of the offer. And the Church's Absolution is (1) the application to us, in a particular case, of a Forgiveness that is always antecedently ready for us, thus declaring that our need of reconciliation to God is already met; and (2) it is the official restoration of us to true membership in the Society, from which our sin had severed us, by severing us from its Head. For ministerial Absolution in the Name of Christ is a social act. Whether it is pronounced publicly or privately, at Holy Communion, or in the Visitation of the Sick, or in the Confessional, it conveys to us the forgiveness of the Brotherhood. And its social aspect is still further emphasized by the Divine condition of which the Lord's Prayer reminds us; the pardon which is given we retain only in so far as we are ready in our turn to bestow it upon others.

So then, the Spirit in the Church, on our admission into it by Baptism, bestows on us new life by placing us in the relation to God of people who are forgiven for Christ's sake. Thenceforth it is our task, in gratitude, to live the forgiven life, *i.e.* the life of penitence, prayer, and of struggle against sin, within the forgiven Society. In living such a life we fail often and miserably. But if seven (or seventy times seven) times a day we offend against God, and seven times a day turn to Him saying "I repent," we find that the readiness to forgive has always preceded our repentance, and has indeed inspired it. The Holy Spirit has but to renew to us the assurance of forgiveness, so restoring us to the relation which we had impaired, and strengthening the new life which we had weakened. And the penalty of impenitence is not that the forgiveness is not equally available, but that we do not make it our own; we resist "the goodness of God, which leadeth us to repentance." Impenitence is the condition of those who will not believe in or accept forgiveness, and therefore—and for no other reason—

are not and cannot be forgiven, because their side of the relation is withheld. It is the self-induced disqualification to take an opportunity that is in our reach. The Forgiveness of Sins is for ever sure. And all that man need do is to make it his own personal possession, by the grace of faith in Jesus Christ, which the Holy Spirit labours to beget and develop in the members of the Society in which He lives.

4. The Forgiveness of Sins, and the consciousness of it, is what the Catechism calls the "state of salvation," *i.e.* the state of being what God wants us to be, that we may become what He would have us become. This is a gift of God, that gift indeed which is "eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." It is a personal possession, and not merely a future hope; not a future extension of what we call this life, but life of a different quality. It is *the Life Everlasting* (in which phrase the suggestion is of endless duration), only because it is the life eternal (a phrase which rather suggests a qualitative difference of existence). Death cannot touch it, or interrupt it; for it is in Christ, and Christ is the Master of death. This eternal life begins now, in the new relation to God in Christ, into which Baptism brings us. And its growth is continued here and hereafter, through the operation of the Holy Spirit, the Life-giver, bringing about in us a progressively closer union with Christ, which involves spiritual deathlessness.

This clause, then, is not primarily a declaration of the natural immortality of man. The early Christians did not doubt that man was by nature immortal, but they were apparently not much interested in the topic. Their chief interest in the final state of man lay not in the fact of its endlessness so much as in the fact of its rich completeness. The life everlasting, the life of the world to come, meant principally to them the life in which each individual should become his perfect Self. This was the reason for the emphasis which they laid on the doctrine of *the Resurrection of the body*. It was their way of expressing their belief that the end of the Christian man was, not a de-personalized absorption into the life of God, but a personal fellowship with Christ,

a fellowship in which his whole Self would be transfigured and changed—unimaginably changed, for it did not yet appear what he should be—but would still remain essentially and identically his own personal Self. His “I,” his distinctive identity, would not be lost or absorbed, but “raised to a higher power.” He would be a complete Personality, his fullest Self, in virtue of a perfected fellowship with Christ, and in Christ with all the redeemed.

This clause was often understood, *e.g.* by writers of the second and third centuries, and perhaps is still popularly understood, as meaning the revivification of the material body which is laid to rest in the grave. Such an interpretation seemed to save Christian thought from a false spirituality, which would depreciate the physical body and legitimize morbid treatment of it. But in the result it was often used rather in the direction of an extremely crude materialism. The deeper thought of the Church has rejected this view. According to St. Paul, the body with which we shall rise will be a “spiritual,” a “celestial,” body. The phrase is rather a negation than a definition; but it seems to imply at least three qualities; (1) it will be incorruptible, and endowed with powers and capacities transcending all that belong to the material body of this earthly life. (2) It is not material, nor do the material particles of our present bodies revive. “We sow not that body that shall be”; for flesh and blood go to corruption, and “cannot inherit the Kingdom of God.” There is no physical, temporal, or spatial connection between the bodies of our low estate and our Resurrection bodies.¹ The mysterious relation between them is definitely non-material. Even in this existence changes of form are often seen to be consistent with continuity of life. The material particles constituting our body at the moment of death are no more a necessary part of our real Self, than those which formed it at our birth, of which not a single one remains. Continuity here is that of Personality, which is spiritual. The spirit after

¹ The hymn “On the Resurrection morning” is a perfect example of how *not* to expound this article of the Creed.

death will find a vesture, which more and more will truly be an embodiment and expression of itself. But in the life of the spirit the body of our low estate plays a definite part, affecting its development.

“Of the soul the body form doth take.”

True ; but then the body reacts upon the spirit, and this spirit, which is to be clothed upon with a spiritual body, will thus preserve the continuity with the material body, being as it were the legatee of that material body's reactions upon the spirit. Hence is deduced the immense, and immensely healthy, emphasis, which Christianity lays on reverence for the body of our low estate, as that by whose reactions the life of man's immortal spirit is profoundly influenced for better or for worse during the earthly part of its pilgrimage. (3) The Resurrection life will, therefore, be a complete personal life, continuous with our present life. The whole man will survive. The risen spirit will possess an organ and means of expression, which is called by analogy a body, but which will be wholly spiritual, *i.e.* wholly equal to the use which the spirit will need to make of it.* Christians lay claim to no esoteric knowledge of the conditions of spiritual existence, or of the nature of the Resurrection body. But they affirm that this life will be one in which we shall at last possess a perfectly adequate means of expression and recognition. It will be a full life, quickened into the fullest capacity of activity and fellowship. It will be an eternal life, because it will be the life of perfect union with Christ. In the immortal future which we shall thus enjoy, we shall each, as individuals, realize our destiny in completion of personality. And, as a race, we shall realize our destiny in the corporate completeness of the “full-grown man,” to attain unto which we are all being built up in the Body of Christ.

IV.

THE FAITH WITHIN THE CREED

CARLYLE has declared in a famous passage ("Hero-worship" *ad init.*) that "a man's religion is the chief fact with regard to him. By religion I do not mean here the church-creed which he professes ; . . . but the thing a man does practically believe, lay to heart, and know for certain, concerning his vital relations to this mysterious universe, and his duty and destiny there, that is in all cases the primary thing for him, and creatively determines all the rest. . . . If you tell me what that is, you tell me to a very great extent what the man is, what the kind of things he will do is." Every man living has a stock of convictions, consciously or subconsciously held, on which the whole structure of his character, the whole fashion of his actions, depends. Hence the question "What do you really believe, about the world, the universe, in other words about God?" is one which goes to the root of a man's life ; and it is one which every man must face, who wishes to be quite honest with himself ; for it forces on him the task of attempting to think clearly about the principles, by which his daily life is fashioned.

A man's real faith is the ultimate director of his conduct. And the failure to appreciate this fact is the root of the objection, so popular in England without and even within the Church, to dogmatic religion. That emphasis on the paramount importance of right conduct, which is the healthiest, as it is perhaps the strongest, element in the English philosophy of life, is something which nobody who has digested Our Lord's parable of the sheep and the goats will disparage. "It does not matter what a man believes, so long as he acts rightly," is not so much untrue for what it asserts, as for what it by implication denies ; for it implies a denial that belief is vitally related to conduct ; and that is certainly a mistake. The real counter to the statement is not its negation, but a request for information as to the

meaning of "right action," *i.e.* as to the standard of morality, its basis, and the possibility of conforming to it.

As soon as this question is fairly faced, it is seen that the problem is one of immense complexity. We may state a general ideal of virtue, but it is very hard to apply it in an individual case, with any sense that one has either knowledge or insight sufficient to do so wisely. The final separation of sheep from goats is something which man dare not forestall. The discrimination is too delicate for any except God to make.

Further, the attempt at a discipline of moral rigorism proves in experience to be an actual danger to morality. Societies which have made the attempt have fallen into one of two errors, sometimes into both of them together. (1) They have externalized the ethical standard, attaching predominant importance to the obvious and grosser sins, at the risk of condoning the subtler, but perhaps more fundamental, sins; *i.e.* they have condemned the prodigal son, whilst overlooking the moral attitude of the elder brother. (2) They have resolved themselves into exclusive societies of "the unco guid," and have often perpetrated the worst of moral cruelties, by strangling at the birth the weak motions of penitence; in rooting up the tares, they have rooted up the wheat also with them. In either case, the reaction upon their own ethical tone has been harmful. Virtuous censoriousness damages those who censure, not less than those who are censured.

The Christian Church is the appointed organ of Christian moral principle. Its ideal obviously is, that it should be a home for all men of good-will. "If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that everyone also that doeth righteousness is begotten of him" (1 John ii. 29), and so his true place is in the fellowship of those who have been baptized into Christ's Body. Church fellowship is intended to be the medium of a practical Christlikeness, to which all good causes are sacred, and all honest efforts at the realization of social good are dear. And so the Church is set to proclaim the moral ideal, of which Christ is the embodiment; to press its

claims; if necessary, to exercise moral discipline to enforce His teaching, though that discipline can hardly be too tender or too charitable. But its main service to the ethical principles of Christianity is something more fundamental. It aims above all at strengthening the spiritual basis of moral endeavour, by laying deep and sound the foundation of religious conviction, in which alone all ethical rules find a real sanction for the obedience which they demand. Thus it is in the very interest of Christian morals, that the Church asserts the primacy of Christian faith. Morals are derivative, and a man's conduct is the outcome of his belief.

Faith, of course, is as internal as Character, and is as hard to judge. The spiritual affinity to Divine ideals is part of man's natural endowment, and forms his capacity for faith; man is created "in the image of God." But, before faith can become actual, this capacity has to be developed and quickened. This is the work of God's grace; and the fellowship of the Church has to provide the agency, through which that grace is to work. It has to create an atmosphere favourable to the growth of such a faith. Hence comes the need for discipline and formula. The Church's treatment of heretics has often been extremely unwise; many an honest searcher after truth has been discouraged or driven into misbelief, because his first immature conclusions have been too roughly handled by the official guardians of Christian orthodoxy. Discipline in matters of doctrine will be wise if it is reluctant to condemn. "The heresy of one age has often become the orthodoxy of the next." Nevertheless, since Christian faith is best fostered in Christian fellowship, it necessarily follows (1) that any element in the fellowship that is too violently discordant with its general spirit is only suffered to remain in the society at the risk of tainting the whole spiritual atmosphere, in which the faith of the rest flourishes; (2) that the basis of social union must be definite, simple, and clear. If it is too elaborate, it will puzzle; and if it is too vague, it will be a weak bond of union. The Creed is the formula, in which the Church has laid down, as simply and yet as definitely

as may be, the fundamental truths of that Faith which is the bond of its common unity.

It has sometimes been asserted, that to accept a Creed is an intellectual vice ; that we should start life with the notion that what we are taught is probably false, and that therefore we should believe nothing but what we discover for ourselves. But there is no other department of life, in which such a principle would be suggested. The scientist or the legislator is not invited to ignore the work of his predecessors in his province. There is no reason why the discoveries and experience of the Christendom of past ages should be considered negligible for the spiritual guidance of the present. The human race is a unity, in its religious evolution, no less than in its scientific or social progress ; and the dependence of present on past is a law that runs through all departments of human development. And, in fact, those who attempt to practise this license of independent belief not rarely fall victims to wild exponents of the most visionary theories ; in reaction against orthodox Christianity, they seem ready to accept anything else. Disraeli has stated the danger in striking language : " Man is a being born to believe ; and, if no Church comes forward with its title-deeds of truth, sustained by the tradition of sacred ages and by the convictions of countless generations, he will find altars and idols in his own heart and his own imagination. . . . There are no tenets, however extravagant, and no practices, however objectionable, which will not in time develop under such a state of affairs."¹ The Church's Creed is as much a guard of intellectual sanity, as it is a foundation of moral aspiration.

We can thus understand the Church's emphasis on the necessity of Faith. It asks from all its members an assent to the Creed ; and it bends all its energies to secure, that this assent shall be the honest expression of a real Christian Faith, sealed in Baptism, proclaimed in that public profession which makes men stronger because it commits them openly, and ratified in a loyal discharge

¹ Speech at Oxford. Nov. 25th, 1864.

of the duties of membership. So it seeks to fortify the whole nature of man. It is not enough to tell a man to do this and not do that. He is born with the desire to ask why he should, and how he can act in such a way; he is born, too, with conflicting tendencies in his nature, some leading upward, some downward. The Church answers the questions; man should love God and man, because this is God's Will revealed in Christ Jesus; man can do so, because in the Church he is made partaker of Christ's life. And in the Church's fellowship resides the Spirit, whereby his better tendencies are reinforced; the Spirit, which is the "Comforter." Thus the Church claims to be the training-ground for the highest faith. And the experience of its history justifies the claim. Its instruction has the title to veneration, which is fitly due to that Society, in which resides the stored spiritual experience of Christendom. To learn what it has to teach is the first stage in the process of religious education, from which we can go on to make its truths true for ourselves, by bringing them to the test of our own experience.

It is true that there are many, whose lives are Christ-like, who yet overtly refuse assent to the Christian doctrines. Of these we can say that their blessing at God's hands is sure, though "they know not what they do." They are of those who, in doing it to the least of Christ's brethren, do it to Him, themselves unwitting. But of how many of these may it not be said that, whatever their profession, the creed by which their conduct is directed is in fact the Faith in Jesus Christ? Even though their belief in it is hidden from themselves, yet the convictions on which the Creed rests are the convictions to which their inmost heart really assents. The Church has many more debtors to it than admit, or even know, their debt to it. Its witness impregnates men's minds with certain spiritual truths, even though, in the form in which the Church states them, they profess to deny them. Its faith and fellowship are a medium for spiritual forces to work in the world, even though many of those affected by them deny the Church's part in their operation. For the Church is the organ of

a power not its own, which effects through the Church results that seem to be, and are, wholly disproportionate to that Church's own sufficiency. It is the embodiment of the life of Christ, and the witness to the Christian Faith; and in this twofold capacity it is the hidden leaven of the world.

Christianity, then, is a Gospel, as well as a Law; and it is a Law, only because it is first a Gospel. It claims reverence for the moral ideal of Jesus Christ, only because it teaches that He is the Son of God, and that through Him we too can be sons of God. The Christian religion is founded on the fact of the historic life of Jesus, regarded not as a dated, isolated, phenomenon, but as the revelation of the eternal movement of God man-wards. The Incarnation brings this eternal movement into time, focusses it, and so gives it definition. We understand the eternal work of God, because we have seen it revealed in the Incarnate Son of God. The Incarnation is but the critical moment in the unceasing operation by which God is bringing man to know and love Him. And Christian faith means the response of the Self to the whole movement, which has been manifested in history, but is going on for ever. The Creed is the assertion of the historic fact and its interpretation; it is not the declaration of "a God by consensus"¹; but it is the declaration of a consensus as to the point where God can best be found; and the consensus is the evidence of the Christian Church in every age. This evidence is the guide which men are wise to follow; but the experience, on which it is based, is one which they have to make their very own.

It must, of course, be granted that the Creed is a human formula, and so is necessarily inadequate to express the full significance of the truths which it enshrines. The language of its clauses is true; but subsequent ages are often able to see more deeply into their meaning. As we grow in spiritual experience, we may in a sense grow beyond the Creed. Our experience becomes too special to be confined

¹ The phrase, if I remember rightly, is found in Winston Churchill's novel "The Inside of the Cup."

within any limits of human expression. We cannot, perhaps, state it to ourselves, but we know that it is more than any mortal tongue can describe. This is only to say that God must be greater than any human description of Him. There is an atmosphere beyond all formulæ, in which the Saints meet and hold converse ; and even lesser men can sometimes catch a breath of its fragrance.

But the value of the Creed lies in its power to guide the personal venture of faith. It is the best summary of the facts, upon which a living conviction is based ; it is the truth, in the realization of which the Christian ages have found the right lines of search for God. We may grow beyond the Creed, but we can never grow out of it ; for the experience, of which it speaks, is always the same. This, after all, is what might have been expected. For this Creed is the outcome of centuries of the Church's experience. It comes to us upon the authority of the Holy Spirit, of the Spirit-bearing Society, and of those holy souls, into whom the Divine Wisdom "from generation to generation passing, has made them friends of God and prophets." In all ages it has been abundantly proved that those who lived nearest to God, and knew and loved Him best, have been those who continued stedfastly in the Apostles' teaching, and made it their own by the free assent of heart and mind and spirit.

Let us ask, then, what are the broad truths contained in this Creed ? Apart from details which, however important, are yet inferential, what is the main view which it enshrines ? What is the Faith in the Creed, the outlook on the universe, which the Church has tried to express in this formula ?

The second paragraph is the centre of gravity. The relation to Christ is the one point which differentiates Christian experience from all other. The fundamental and peculiar Christian truth, is that Jesus Christ reveals God, that God is like Him ; that He reveals the Character and Purpose of God, because He is Himself God. Jesus Christ is not accidental to God, but essential to and in Him. Only because He is so, can His revelation of God

be held to be both sure and sufficient. He is not a man seeking to know God, who in his theories came nearer than other teachers to setting before us the kind of God in Whom we should like to believe ; He is God Himself, showing Himself to man, whether men are ready to welcome the news or not.

He is God in man. Christianity equates man to Jesus Christ freely and fully. What He is, man is to become ; His perfection is the measure of our aspiration. There is nothing that is not wholly human about His Incarnate Life. But we are not to argue that therefore He cannot be Divine ; rather we are to say that, because He is Perfect Man, therefore He must be Divine. The true inference is, that the natural distance between God and man is not the abyss which sin has made ; the perfect Humanity, which is the only true Humanity, is fully capable of the fullest union with God. " So truly was man made in God's image that God could really live a human life, without ceasing to be God."¹ And therefore, while we are to equate man to Christ, we can also equate Christ to God.

On this central belief about Christ everything else in Christianity depends. And, because it is personal trust in a Person, therefore it can be neither taught, nor proved by logical reasoning. There are various starting-points for Christian faith. Thus (1) the personal impression of Jesus, as recorded in the Gospels, is one that makes its own appeal. He carries His own sign-manual of Deity. And (2) the God thus revealed is supremely worth loving. If God is such, then the universe is tolerable ; and we persist in regarding the human instinct, which demands an explanation that makes the universe tolerable, as a prophecy, and therefore we look upon that which satisfies it as a revelation. What else can we do, unless we are to confess all human aspiration to be a futility ? (3) There is the historical fact, that the impact of Jesus Christ on the world has cloven history in twain, and set Him as alike the climax of previous development and the source of future progress.

¹ Gore. " The Creed of the Christian." *The Incarnation.*

Universal history is a chaos, until we learn to see Him as the Centre of it.

But these are only starting-points for faith. Ultimately, the question is decided by the personal experience that to accept Jesus Christ as the revelation of God in man lifts us to a new plane of life, and unfolds a boundless vista of future development. The Christian's final resource is simply to declare his own fellowship to be truly with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ, and to invite another to share it with him. The responsibility of Christian teachers is indeed immense; they may well tremble lest they spoil their case by the way in which they present it, lest to their natural insufficiency they add unfaithfulness to their trust. Again, the responsibility of those who profess the Name of Christ is tremendous. Good Christian lives glorify Christ; but the inconsistency of Christians brings shame on His Name. Yet, after all, the responsibility of the hearers still remains, and upon it Our Lord lays the strongest emphasis. "Take heed how ye hear." He seems to anticipate no automatic success from even the wisest and most devoted efforts of His followers. The Apostles, like the Prophets, were sent to the people, "whether they would hear or whether they would forbear." They are warned that their labours may not seldom end in their shaking from their feet the dust of a place where they have laboured. Christ Himself "came unto His own, and they that were His own received Him not." And so it is still upon the hearers, that the last responsibility rests; for it is they that have to make the proffered experiment; and according to the spirit in which they make it, they will or will not discover, as a result, a wholly new meaning and purpose in life, and in the world wherein men live.

For, ultimately, we reach this consideration, that Christianity is the sole real basis for a special theory of the universe. We have eventually to select between three alternatives, that the universe is evil, that it is neutral, or that it is good. The first is the view of the Pessimistic philosophy. That philosophy has been held by a few thinkers here and there as a theory. It is,

substantially, adopted by many men as a pose. But it can never carry, in its crude form, any general conviction, for three reasons; (1) that few or none of those who profess it can be found to carry it to its logical conclusion in practice, *viz.* the act of suicide; (2) that it makes the origin of good inexplicable; (3) that the philosophy is simply intolerable; human nature cannot bear it, or resign itself to its acceptance.

The second view, which regards the universe as neutral, has been called the distinctive philosophy of our day. "It will not commit itself to the existence of absolute good or absolute evil. It conceives it as most probable that neither has any share in the government of the world. It will go no further than to admit the existence of a force, sometimes called Will, more often called, with intentional vagueness, merely Life, which is, so far as human intelligence can understand it, neither good nor evil, neither benevolent nor malevolent, and utterly indifferent to the feelings of man."¹ Of this creed the works of Thomas Hardy are perhaps the most picturesque exposition. "There is no trace in his work," continues his appreciator, "of contempt for human will, endurance, and passion. All may be futile; but all are engrossing to the interest, and all may compel admiration."² But, for all that, man is a mannikin, a "figment." In "The Dynasts" the Chorus of the Pities protests against "the intolerable antilogy of making figments feel." But this antilogy "is no one's fault. It is not heaven's fault, for heaven is and ever was unconscious. It is not man's fault, for man acts under the compulsion of a will which is his own, yet not his own." "The Immanent Will is the force that keeps the world going. It is blind, deaf, and unconscious. It sleeps, and it never was awake. It has no purpose, good or evil; but work on it must." And human nature has to work out its destiny "under the impulse of a power, which it has not even the satisfaction of being able to curse and to defy as a malignant enemy."³

¹ H. Child. "Thomas Hardy," p. 10.

² *Ib.*, p. 21.

³ *Ib.*, pp. 112, 102, 108.

This is a dreary creed ; in practice it trends almost inevitably towards the pessimistic theory, and scarcely escapes from the force of some of the objections which are felt to pure Pessimism. Even Thomas Hardy, with all his artistic self-restraint, yet allowed himself at least one curse, one shaking of the fist, at the unheeding power, in the famous finale to "Tess of the D'urbervilles"; "'Justice' was done, and the President of the Immortals (in Aeschylean phrase) had ended his sport with Tess." But it must be admitted that the theory is not without its own argumentative support. Nature speaks with ambiguous voice to God's Character. We see the Power, but are we so sure of the Love? The manifold beauties of the natural world cannot quite blind us to the apparent cruelty of its processes. "To my thinking, the quantity and the quality of the life and death, pleasure and pain, of animals, if you look at them apart from man, are enough to beat every card in Faith's hand."¹ Nor, if we look at human history, is the evidence very much more convincing. True, there are Love and Joy and Happiness, and, on the whole, an upward tendency in human progress, though with manifold curves and set-backs. But are there not countless lives that seem to be but the sport of circumstance, the puppets of a heartless Force? Is the lot of Tess Durbeyfield so unexampled in real life? And is not the passionate indignation of the novelist, at the folly and cruelty of it, a feeling which incidents of actual experience often provoke us to share?

And yet, to the Christian, this theory, however plausible, is utterly impossible. To him the universe is, however little it may at times seem such, the sphere in which a loving Purpose is being worked out; and to be on the side of Love and Goodness is to be in harmony with its inmost secret, and in line with its fundamental law. He admits all the puzzles; he too finds them puzzling, at times almost intolerably puzzling. He cannot answer his questioner's or his own queries, not even to his own satisfaction. He feels that the world-

¹ Stephen Paget. "I wonder." Cap. V.

plan is beyond him, that he sees but part, and only very imperfectly can understand even that part, or reconcile its appearances with his belief. But he finds in Jesus Christ a fact that counterbalances all actual and all possible arguments against the Love of God. In Christ he sees God revealed beyond dispute as the Father, Whose Love is antecedent to all things. Christ is the last proof that God is Love, and that the Purpose in the world is one of Love. Perhaps indeed He is ultimately the only proof that really proves. It seems to be increasingly clear that the Christian theory of the universe is really untenable without the Christian theory of Christ. Let us set, side by side with Thomas Hardy's comment, quoted above, on Tess' death, some quotation that expresses the Christian view of the universe, *e.g.* that from J. R. Lowell's well-known poem :

“ Though the cause of evil prosper,
 Yet 'tis truth alone is strong,
 Though her portion be the scaffold,
 And upon the throne be wrong.
 Yet that scaffold sways the future,
 And, behind the dim unknown,
 Standeth God within the shadow,
 Keeping watch above His own.”

Which of the two do we choose? Have we any solid ground, apart from Christ, for choosing the latter? Does God keep watch above His own? Is a loving Providence in charge of humanity? Many races and ages have believed it; many a religion and philosophy has taught it. And yet, is there any balance of arguments, apart from Christ, which makes it even probable? Apart from Him, man has, at best, but a very forlorn hope to inspire his conduct of life; a hope which may not indeed be called ignoble, where it exists, nor wholly lacking in power of inspiration; but none the less, a hope which seems on reflection to be but the angry or stubborn reaction of the soul against the despair, or the blank doubt, which logic offers as the only rational deduction from the circumstances of the world's life. But, if Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, then at last we have enough reason to justify us in taking God on

trust for all that we do not understand, and cannot as yet explain. God loved so much that He suffered. The Life and Death of Jesus Christ are not an isolated event in time; they are the Revelation of the eternal Agony of God for human sin. The Cross of Jesus Christ is but the visible manifestation to man of what God is always enduring, of the fact that He is, and has always been, suffering for and with man. It is the proof of how great and genuine and willing the Passion of God is. The Love of such a God may work in ways that we cannot fathom; but at least it is a Love that cannot be doubted, for it has given its proof.

Such a view of God and the universe furnishes the only secure basis for personal efforts after holiness. Here and there a sufficient inspiration may be provided by humanitarian or social enthusiasm, or even by a man's obstinate and unreasoned sense of his own individual dignity. But the average man, in order to make and persevere in the effort, needs to be buoyed up by the conviction that he is in accord with the deepest purpose of the universe, that the cause of Love and Goodness, however hard-pressed it seems at any time to be, is the cause for which ultimate victory is sure, even if he cannot see its triumph in his earthly lifetime. And this is the hope and faith for which Jesus Christ alone gives solid ground. For He shows man a God, Who is such as to appeal to the best in man, a God Who is known, because He has revealed Himself, and Who is known as the Father, because Jesus is the Revelation of His Character.

In revealing God, Jesus Christ also reveals man. Humanity at its highest—which is Humanity as it really is—is not alien or indifferent to the Divine Nature. It has been taken up into God. The belief in the revelation of God in man is the really vital thing in Christianity. Men are the sons of God; not mannikins, not "figments," whose life is as futile as the play of motes in the sunbeam; but beings made in the image of God, having upon them the dignity of the Divine impress. And this dignity, however far man falls, and knows that he falls, from it, is still his to realize through Jesus Christ. "As many as receive Him, to them gives

He the right to become children of God." In the Manhood of Jesus Christ each can read the quality of his own best Self. All the moral struggle, which forms the keynote of true human life, is not a preordained futility. For man is not battling to add a new and alien virtue to his nature, or attain an ideal that is in any sense superhuman; the attempt to become like Christ is but the attempt to liberate the full powers that are latent already in humanity. The man who is most near to God is most truly man, for in Christ we see, actually realized, the perfect harmony which prevails between the Divine and the human, when the human is completely true to its own possibilities. We see, correlatively manifested, the Divinity of Man and the Humanity of God.

And the Manhood of Christ is ours to share. He is "the first-born among many brethren." In the brotherhood of the Church the gift of His Humanity is imparted to His brethren; and the fellowship of the baptized is the fellowship of those to whom the life of Christ's glorified Manhood is communicated. The ideal of human brotherhood is set forth in a Divine Society, inclusive of all more partial forms of association, and revealing the spiritual basis of all the highest communion of man with man, as lying in the Life of Jesus Christ, whereof all may become partakers.

Regarded, therefore, in the light of God's purpose, the Church is not to be thought of as a rigidly exclusive circle, but as a living nucleus, like the sun, spreading its light and heat, and exercising its attraction. There is similar significance in Our Lord's metaphor of the Vine. Christ's life works from within outwards, constantly pushing out new tendrils, nurturing new grafts. The brotherhood of mankind is to come by the growth and enlargement of a living, organic, unity, which is eventually to become "the greatest of all trees," the tree of Humanity redeemed in Christ. The principle of its life is Christ Himself. In the fellowship of those who by Baptism have come into vital union with Him, is the living embryo which is to grow into the Kingdom of God. The Divine climax will be reached when in all

the redeemed race, completely united, the Life of Christ flows full and free.

And the life that is thus in Christ is eternal, because it is in God; and "all live unto Him." Worldly chances and the lot of mortal nature have no power over it. Eternal already here, hereafter it but continues to develop, until its perfect consummation is reached in the era of the new heaven and the new earth, when the unity of earth and heaven shall be perfected, for in both righteousness will dwell, and God will be All and in all. When God's name is hallowed, His Will is done, and His Kingdom is come, as in heaven so in earth, then all things shall be made new, and human society will reach its completion, in the fulfilment of the great vision of the book of Revelation.

Every step in this series of inferences depends on the primary acceptance of Jesus Christ as the Revelation of God in Man. If this is true—but, so far as I can see, on no other condition—then we know that God is Father, for so Jesus Christ reveals God; we know that man can be son, for so Jesus Christ reveals man; and we know that the Church is His organ, for we see the principle of Christ's life at work in it, pushing through it outwards to enlargement and ultimate fulfilment. The manifold weaknesses and failures of the Church are but the token of its present immaturity; and they must not blind our eyes to the undeniable fact of the enormous influence for good which the Church has exercised, and continues to exercise, in human history, and which is the manifest sign of its Divine basis. "To what does a body so conspicuously worthless owe its influence? If the *minus* is so great, how great is the *plus*?"¹ We may, we must, grant that the Church has never been, and is not yet, a perfectly free channel for God's grace, a perfectly faithful instrument of His Spirit. The channel is littered, sometimes almost choked, by obstacles of prejudice and ignorance and selfishness and other forms of sin. The instrument is often out of gear, dusty, corroded, not running "freely." And yet, after all such

¹ Glover, "The Christian Tradition." Lect. III.

admissions, it still remains as it has been throughout the age. The Gospel of Christ, the Word of God; that the best elements have proceeded, in one way or another, and that it has continued to receive correction and vital renewal to the Life within it and to the world.

So we are brought back to the early Christians. The Christian is explicit that which the Christian is without definite formula. The Christian is of God and man, which is because He is Himself God. That. We do not believe in making inferences which are not inferences all come later, but all, with the confidence of the Christian, if we did not already believe. But we believe in Him, and in those on which the early Christians only so can we interpret the Word which He makes. We believe in Resurrection and Ascension entirely with the whole Christian community believe in Him as the Word of the Life in God. And we see that others try to justify themselves; we see the result occurs in our case as well as our inferences. We do not believe (and only on this basis) we have surety of access to; and on the basis of this basis) man is really loving and hope for ourselves and for others that we "shall be delivered from the bondage of the law," of which we cannot have the liberty of the glory of the Word will not renounce the hope

Faith of the Catholic Church

It remains true that the Catholic Church, throughout the ages the one constant witness to Christ, the one central focus of the grace of the best elements in our civilization have found their way or another, from its inspiration; and it has continuously shown that power of self-renewal, which is the best testimony of its life and whence it comes.

We might go back once more to the belief of the early Christians. The Creed only formulates and makes explicit what they held implicitly and as yet unformulated. Jesus Christ gives us a theory of life, which can be accepted as certain, because He Himself is God and Man. All flows from this. We do not believe in Him because of the miracles which that belief justifies. The miracles do not come later; we could not deduce them at all from the confidence which alone makes them credible. We do not already believe securely in Him. We believe in Him, ultimately on the same grounds as the early Christians believed; because we have interpreted His Life and the impression it has made on us. We accept His unique Birth, His Death and Ascension, because these accord with the whole impression. So we learn to see His Life as the Way to God, the Truth of God, the Kingdom of God. And experience verifies the belief. We try it, and that in them the experience verifies itself; we try it ourselves, and the same experience verifies our case also. And then we can make our faith explicit. We discover that on the basis of this (and on this basis) God is really lovable, and that there is a way of access to a God really worth coming to. We can be confident on the basis of this belief (and only on this basis) that God is really lovable too, and we can feel a sure hope for ourselves and for mankind. We can be confident that we shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption. We cannot deny the reality, "into the Kingdom of the children of God," of which we have the hope.

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